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BEFRIENDING THE OTHER

Edited by

Selva Rathinam

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A JOURNAL FOR SOCIO-RELIGIOUS RESEARCH

Befriending the Other

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Editorial

“Befriending the Other” is the theme we have chosen for this issue. ‘Befriending’ means to make friends or to become friendly with the other. In our Indian context of religious and cultural pluralism, living together in harmony, while preserving the identities, is of paramount importance. It is all the more important in our context of cultural conflicts and religious rivalries. Befriending someone who has the same wave length is easy. But befriending someone who has opposite ideology is challenging. Jesus posed this challenge to us when he said, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you....For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?” (Mt 5:43-47). Thus, as disciples of Jesus we are called to commit ourselves to work with all people of good will promoting the pattern of befriending others for the sake of establishing together justice, peace and common good. Saint Pope John Paul II promotes dialogue in his Encyclical “*Ut Unum Sint*” to rediscover brotherhood. Pope Francis called for “tolerant and inclusive society” in White House speech while visiting the USA on September 24, 2015.

Keeping the above in mind, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth: Pontifical Institute of Philosophy and Religion (JDV) while celebrating the Diamond Jubilee of its transfer from Kandy, Ceylon to Pune, India in 1955, organized an International Conference on the theme “Befriending the Other” on 24-28 November 2015. The papers in this issue of *Jeevadhara* are selections from this International Conference. Through

this issue *Jeevadhara* invites its readers to genuine encounter between different cultures and communities.

Arjen Tete in his paper advocates friendship with water as an adequate inter-religious response to the current crisis of water insecurity in India. Selva Rathinam urges us to get back to the substance of Religions which have at their core the protection of the weak. Keith D'Souza brings to our awareness an ongoing task and challenge of personal growth that involves befriending the self, befriending others largely within one's community and befriending others beyond one's community. For Noel Sheth Buddhist befriending is holistic: it befriends human beings, even enemies and nature. He invites Buddhists, Christians and others to hearken to the call of peace and altruistic love, to heal a broken world. Kurien Kunnumpuram invites the Catholic faithful to imbibe the spirit of the Vatican II Council to establish cordial relations with non-Catholic Christians, the followers of other faiths and the modern world.

I express my sincere thanks and appreciation to all the contributors of this issue. May these articles help us to get out of our ghettos to befriend the other.

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Befriending Water: A Pathway to Sustainable Development

ArjenTete

The complex situation of Water availability poses a threat to human survival in India and we are called to befriend water. Population pressure, domestic demand, agricultural irrigation, rapid urbanization, industrialization and climate change reduce the actual amount of water that is available for human use in India. The Indian government tries to manage the water crisis by launching several water policies. However, we have not managed to create a water-secure India. Therefore, the need of the hour is to move towards a kinship model of relationship to befriend water. In this connection this paper attempts to redeem the sacred status water has enjoyed since life appeared on earth and to divest her of a commodity-driven character. It invites us to gaze on water with the eyes of love rather than with utilitarian designs. Exploring the causes and effects of the Indian water crisis the author advocates friendship with water as an adequate inter-religious response to the current crisis of water insecurity in India. The author Dr. Arjen Tete S.J is Professor of Systematic Theology, JDV, Pune.

“Water is the most essential element for life, and the future of humanity depends on our capacity to guard it and share it”¹ Pope Francis.

Introduction

In her national poem *Vande Mâtaram*, India is described as the land full of water and fruit. Today, however, the water crisis in India is the most pervasive dimension of the nation’s encroaching desolation. Water privatization, poisoned rivers, population increase, rapid industrial growth, urbanization, agriculture, and climate change are putting

¹ Pope Francis, “Sunday *Angelus* Address in Saint Peter’s Square” (World Water Day: March 22, 2015).

tremendous pressure on water demand and posing a complex and wide-ranging threat to human survival as well as to the eco-system. Inefficient management is bad enough when the supply is plentiful; it is potentially disastrous when we have diminishing resources. Hence, befriending water will mean both a way of understanding water and a way to help save her. Exploring the mystery of water in the natural world and her essentiality for life, this paper attempts to redeem the sacred status water has enjoyed since life appeared on earth and to divest her of a commodity-driven character, which is only a recent manifestation. It invites us to gaze on water with the eyes of love rather than with arrogant, utilitarian designs.

1. Indian Situation

India is still considered rich in terms of annual rainfall and total water resources. The annual precipitation of the country is estimated at 4,000 billion cubic meters, including snow-fall, for which details are not available. The combination of rainfall, surface, and groundwater resources seems sufficient for providing adequate water to the Indian population. However, the Indian case is not monolithic but complex. A closer look at India's water resources reveals huge disparities of water availability from region to region. The levels of precipitation vary from 100 mm a year in western Rajasthan to over 9,000 mm a year in the north eastern state of Meghalaya.² Let us now unpack some of the Indian water stressors.

a. Population Pressure

According to UN-Water, "water use has been increasing at more than twice the rate of population increase in the last century," and the rate of withdrawal is expected to increase 50 percent more in the so-called "developing countries" by 2025.³ India has 18 percent of the world's population but only 4 percent of the freshwater resources and 2.4 percent of the world's land area.⁴ Today, India's population has

²Planning Commission, Government of India, *India Assessment 2002 – Water Supply and Sanitation*, <http://planningcommission.nic.in/reports/genrep/wtrsani.pdf>, accessed on 3rd August, 2015.

³ See, UN-Water 2014, <http://www.unwater.org>, accessed on 3rd August, 2015.

⁴ Ministry of Water Resources, Government of India, *National Water Policy* (2012), <http://wrmin.nic.in/>, accessed 3rd August, 2015.

grown to over 1.2 billion and per capita water availability has fallen to barely more than 2,000 cubic metres (cm) per year, with the actual usable quantity being around 1,122 cm per year. With the current population, India is projected to become a water-scarce country by around 2025.⁵

b. Domestic Demand

Domestic water use will increase as the population continues to grow. Economic development is raising the standard of living for many people. As more and more people achieve a level of affluence, more demand is placed on the freshwater supply. Peter Rogers and Susan Leal observe that as the better-educated and higher-paid populations of China and India ascend into the middle class, they are increasing their water footprint.⁶

c. Agricultural Irrigation

Indian agriculture, though mostly rain-fed, uses more than 90 percent of the total freshwater due to the unpredictability of the monsoon.⁷ This places greater demands on surface and groundwater resources at the expense of the industrial and the domestic supply.

d. Rapid Urbanization and Industrialization

The Census 2001 projection report shows that only 28 percent of India's population is urban.⁸ However, the urban population in India is expected to double in the first three decades of this century. PM Modi has announced

⁵A country is said to become water-stressed when the per capita annual fresh water supply is between 1,000 and 2,000 cubic meters. It becomes water-scarce when the supply falls below 1,000 cm. See Binayak Ray, *Water: The Looming Crisis in India* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2008), 5.

⁶Peter Rogers and Susan Leal, *Running Out of Water: The Looming Crisis and Solutions to Conserve Our Most Precious Resource* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 6.

⁷Aseem Shrivastava and Ashish Kothari, *Churning the Earth: The Making of Global India* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2012), 178.

⁸See http://www.jsk.gov.in/projection_report_december2006.pdf accessed 3rd March, 2015.

his vision to set up 100 smart cities across the country. Urbanization generally accompanies industrialization. As the country rapidly urbanizes and industrializes, greater quantities of water will be required.

e. Climate Change

Climate change will further decrease water availability. In its paper, "The Himalayan Challenge: Water Security in Emerging Asia," published in 2010,⁹ the Strategic Foresight Group has shown that a combination of two factors - rapid glacier melt and erratic, heavy, and intense monsoon patterns - of climate change are already impacting the Ganges and Brahmaputra Rivers. The group foresees that on account of fewer days of rain, adequate amounts of water will not percolate down to the groundwater tables. Increased temperatures will also increase the rate of evapotranspiration. This will further reduce the actual amount of water that is available for human use.

2. Management of the water crisis

Realizing the gravity of the problem, the Government of India has launched a number of policies, acts, and plans for the management of water. I shall highlight some of the key features of the three National Water Policies in order to elucidate the national perspective on water. The National Water Policy (1987) positively recognized water as one, indivisible resource, affirming that rainfall, river waters, surface ponds, lakes and ground water are all part of one interdependent system, which is part of yet a larger ecological system.¹⁰ There is no mention of private sector participation in the water management.

The 2002 National Water Policy added priorities to include ecology and navigation, and divided industry into categories of agriculture-related and non-agricultural industries. However, this policy encouraged privatization of water.¹¹

⁹ Strategic Foresight Group, "The Himalayan Challenge: Water Security in Emerging Asia," (A paper published in 2010), http://www.strategicforesight.com/publication_pdf/85801himalayan-challenge.pdf, accessed on 3rd July, 2015.

¹⁰ National Water Policy 1987, no.1:2.

¹¹ National Water Policy 2002, no.13.

The National Water Policy of 2012 states that water needs to be managed as a community resource, and held by the state under public trust doctrine, in order to achieve food security, support livelihood, and ensure equitable and sustainable development for all. It also upholds the ecological needs of rivers for the first time, stipulating that water be set aside in proportion to a river's natural flow regime.¹² At the same time, this policy underlines the need to treat water as an economic good, thus providing flexibility for allocating water for industrial use even at the cost of agriculture. It says that after meeting the minimum quantity of water required for survival of human beings and ecosystems, available water "should increasingly be subjected to allocation and pricing on economic principles so that water is not wasted in unnecessary uses and could be utilized more gainfully."¹³

Together, the three National Water Policies have prioritized dam building and extracting underground water while masking the human toll exacted by these industries. The policies have gradually progressed from perceiving water as a national resource to approaching her as an economic good. Although there have been some initial successes, in the long run such policies are unsustainable. A 2005 study entitled "Financing the Water Crises," published in India by Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, has documented widespread failures of water privatization.¹⁴ In reality, such short sighted strategies are inflicting catastrophic environmental and social ruin on the country as a whole, particularly upon the poor, who disproportionately bear the greatest burden of the crisis.

Perception of water as an economic commodity has precipitated a boom in the bottled water industry.¹⁵ Along with bottling plants for

¹² National Water Policy, 2012, no.3:3

¹³ National Water Policy, 2012, no.7:4.

¹⁴ See Navdanya, "Financing the Water Crises: World Bank, International Aid and Water Privatization," available from <http://www.indiawaterportal.org/sites/indiawaterportal.org/files/water-crisis.pdf>, accessed on 9th May, 2015.

¹⁵ Other than the market leader, Parle's Bisleri, there is Pepsi with its Aquafina brand. Tata Tea has recently acquired a big stake in Mount Everest. Coca-cola, which sells water under the Kinley label, has bought a part of Glaceau.

fizzy drinks, the industry has contributed to falling water tables, groundwater depletion, and the spread of pollution across many regions of the country. The rise of bottled water has actually come at the expense of public drinking water. The lure of huge profits has attracted big players into the water-bottling business.

Tragically, water management in India has always taken a top-down approach and has become virtually a government monopoly, resulting in the exploitation of additional water resources. Despite efforts of The World Bank and the Government of India to address the water crisis, development pressures and rise in demand are changing the scenario of water availability and the priorities of water distribution in India today.

Despite our technological mastery, however, we have not managed to create a water-secure India. Technology is useful and necessary, but is merely a tool rather than a solution to the complex water crisis. While it is true that we need more sustainable and effective technologies, policies, and assistance from international and national institutions to prevent and resolve the water crisis, the stresses on our Indian rivers and water supplies are so great and so widespread that along with the implementation of these measures we need a new imagination of reverence and responsibility for water. Thomas Berry has rightly said:

The pathos of the present is that the human community has lost its capacity to interact creatively with the other components of the planet Earth. This includes the landscape of the planet; the nurturing qualities of the air, the water, and the soil; the energy flow that enables the dynamic powers of the Earth to continue their functioning; the life systems that are integrated in an immense complex of partners beyond full human understanding.¹⁶

Even WIPRO has entered the bottled water business with its purchase of the FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods) firm Unza. See Srivastava & Kothari, *Churning the Earth*, 100-106.

¹⁶ Thomas Berry, *The Sacred Universe: Earth, Spirituality, and Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 81.

Water is perceived variously as a commodity, as a commons (common property), as a basic right, and as a sacred resource or divinity. Fundamental attitudes towards water can also worsen the crisis. Those who see water as a commodity are often blind to the other dimensions of water. Therefore, rejecting the absolute kingship model of relationship with the earth and water, we need to move beyond the stewardship model as well, to a kinship model of relationship to befriend water. The notion of stewardship maintains the structure of hierarchical dualism. In evolutionary history we form one mutually interdependent community of life. We are all kin.

3. Befriending water

Friendship implies self-disclosure. Persons, though enigmatic, are revealed by their roots, backgrounds, and biographies. Therefore, in order to understand and appreciate the life-mediating properties of water and to enhance friendship with her, I will first explore the root story of water and her physical and chemical properties. Subsequently, I shall articulate spiritual and ethical implications of befriending water for a sustainable development.

In his work, *Life's Matrix: A Biography of Water*, science writer Phillip Ball writes that "like a person, water has immediate, evident, and familiar characteristics that can be understood only, if at all, by a consideration of its deeper makeup, of the hidden factors that shape its behaviors." Ball continues that "water may remain in some respects a mystery, but is - and has always been - a most fecund mystery, one that provokes us to find new ways of exploring the nature of the physical world."¹⁷ Water is a mystery, but water is also a physical reality. Water changes the face of the land, splitting open rock desert like a peach. She is the visible face of climate. Myths and legends have depicted water as the blood that runs through the intricate network of veins and arteries of Mother Earth as rivers and streams, providing sustenance to plant and animal life everywhere.

¹⁷ Philip Ball, *Life's Matrix: Biography of Water* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1999), x.

a. Origins of Water

Water is a tiny molecule consisting of three atoms: two of hydrogen and one of oxygen. Water molecules cling to each other because of a force called hydrogen bonding. The hydrogen atoms attract the negative charge of oxygen atoms that are part of other water molecules. She “takes the form of droplets rather than spreading out as a thin film. The high surface tension of water is responsible for capillary action, which allows it (and its dissolved substances) to move through the roots of plants as well as through the veins and arteries of the human body.”¹⁸

How did hydrogen and oxygen emerge in our universe? According to Ball, hydrogen originated in the cooling period after the initial Big Bang explosion. Oxygen is said to be the third most abundant element in the universe after hydrogen and helium. Since they are the primordial generation after the Big Bang, they constitute almost every strand of creation. But, helium is unreactive. It remains aloof. Water, the combination of hydrogen and oxygen, therefore, pervades the universe.

b. Physiognomies of Water

Water is a shape-shifter. She exists in three states on earth: liquid, gas, and solid. Liquid water is a jumbled bunch of water molecules. She comes out of faucets, flows underground and in rivers and oceans, and forms clouds and fog in the air. When water freezes into a solid, she does a strange thing: she floats. Most other solids become denser and sink. If water behaved that way, ice would accumulate on the bottom of the lakes and oceans during the winter, and would have difficulty melting in the spring. This would have serious consequences for aquatic life as ocean is still home to more kinds of life than anywhere else on the planet.

c. Movements of Water

The Greek philosopher Heraclitus once said that one can never walk through the same river twice because water is in constant flux. Earth

¹⁸ Nathaniel Altman, *Sacred Water: The Spiritual Source of Life* (Mahwah, N.J.: Hidden Spring, 2002), 9.

water is always in motion. She moves inside the planet, across its surface, and in the atmosphere above. Water in lakes, rivers, and oceans turns into vapor and moves into the air through evaporation. Plants draw water from the soil and return it to the air. Volcanoes release water vapor that is locked deep inside rocks. Water's main, reliable routine forms what we know as the water or hydrologic cycle. This water cycle repeats continuously, which makes it possible for the same water to nourish the earth over and over again. If not for this water cycle there would not be water enough for our planet.¹⁹ Our water system is connected around the world.

Another surprising characteristic of liquid water is that she can absorb and store huge amounts of heat without melting, freezing, or boiling. Water boils at a very high temperature -100 degree Celsius at sea level - compared to similarly sized molecules. If water behaved like other liquids, it would exist as a gas at the temperatures found on earth, and life as we know it could not survive. This awesome characteristic of water affects climate in many ways. Ocean currents move warm water around the globe. At the North and South poles, sea ice forms and melts with seasons. Water vapor in the atmosphere holds the sun's heat like a blanket. Clouds and ice sheets reflect some of that heat back into space. Together, these processes keep our planet from getting too hot or too cold.²⁰

d. The Human Body and Water

Just as life began in the primeval seas, human and other mammalian life continues to originate in the water of the womb. Gary Chamberlain rightly affirms, "We begin our lives in uterine water, amniotic fluid. When 'the waters break,' we are born."²¹ Our bodies consist of two-thirds water. Yet, we do not wobble like a bulging water-skin. Certainly, some of this fluid gurgles in our guts, surges in our veins, lubricates our palate and our eyelids and joints. Water plays an active role of solvent

¹⁹ E. Marie Boyle, *Water: Its Form and Motion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 2.

²⁰ Gary L. Chamberlain, *Troubled Waters: Religion, Ethics, and the Global Water Crisis* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 68.

²¹ Chamberlain, *Troubled Waters*, 74.

and carrier for the cellular machinery of our bodies. Ball notes that without her, other biomolecules would not only be left stranded and immobile, they might no longer truly be biomolecules, unraveling or seizing up and losing their biological function in the process. Therefore, Ball concludes that biology starts with water - historically, ontologically, pedagogically.²²

4. Implications of Befriending Water

We have seen above how the hydrological cycle preserves and communicates life and creates beauty in nature and the human body in mysterious and miraculous ways. Scientists and poets have marveled at the fecund mystery of water. The mystery of water awakens us to attend to the “signs of the times” everywhere life breaks forth and comes into being and alerts us to denounce an economic system built on the cult of commodity and consumerism.

Therefore, friendship with water challenges us to revitalize the fragile hope that is ever present, even where life is being plundered and eviscerated. We are challenged to practice justice, not only to humankind but to non-human creation as well. We are invited to develop a water ethic that conduces to the sustainability of our planetary home.

a. Contemplative Response

Befriending water necessitates us to contemplate water as God’s revelation, to gaze on her with the eyes of love. We will not save what we do not love. A contemplative response engages water with religious imagination. Though there are many things in nature to be contemplated, admired, and enjoyed, they are not ours to pollute or privatize. Water is a sacrament of love and life. We are responsible to uphold water as the source of life without turning her into a source of death and decay.

b. Ascetic Response

Befriending water challenges us to restrain our rampant consumerism and self-indulgence. This is not a world-denying but a life-affirming asceticism, summoning us to protect and preserve water for life. We

²² Ball, *Life’s Matrix*, 250.

do these things not to make ourselves suffer but to ensure environmental sustainability and indeed the very survival of the cosmos itself. Humanness consists in living together, giving life to one another, and sharing water, forest, and earth with all living things. It consists in solidarity with the whole of creation; in making sure that the basic needs of everyone are met, and in the creative possibility of everybody having a share in existing resources and opportunities. There is neither humanness nor authentic happiness apart from the wholeness of the universe and the peace of all things.

c. Prophetic Response

Friendship with water challenges us to take critical action on behalf of the earth and water, whether politically, economically, culturally, or socially. Contemporary spirituality cannot be seen in isolation from the faith-justice mandate. Christians have an imperative from the Scriptures for a prophetic spirituality. Hence, we counter non-sustainable cultures and the systemic destruction of our world through healing, caring for, and protecting our earth, even if our actions run counter to the political and economic interests of the powerful. We ought to resist the technology, which is born of greed and has proven to be inhuman and death-dealing.

d. Pastoral-Educational Response

Christians constitute only 2.3% of the population in India, numerically insignificant compared to Hindus. In a society with an overwhelming population of Hindus, Muslims, and other religious groups, the Church in India is a powerful organization with a large network of structures, institutions, and services to educate the people of India.²³ Recognizing the water crisis as one of the several challenges to Christian mission, bishops, in their pastoral letters; and pastors, in their preaching, teaching, and retreat direction, could invite people to appreciate more deeply our covenant with creation as central to right relationship with God and

²³ As of 2011 statistics, Roman Catholics run Colleges and schools: 14,429, Training Institutes: 1,086, Hospitals and dispensaries: 1,826, Publications: 292. Available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church_in_India, accessed 17th July, 2015.

one another. They could accordingly articulate a faithful response based on political responsibility, employment, family life and personal lifestyle, calling people to acknowledge their corporate responsibility for the state in which we find ourselves and resolve to pull back from the brink of disaster. Priests, religious, and seminarians are well-placed to register a powerful protest against a wasteful lifestyle devoid of any sense of responsibility to the world of nature.

Re-education in the traditions, scriptures, cosmologies, and spiritualities is central. Through the re-appropriation of the doctrine of creation, incarnation, and a dialectical doctrine of God (balancing transcendence with immanence), Christian education can lead toward a new vision, a holistic worldview conceived for the environment. Such an educational program also demands an appreciation of the way in which scientific understandings complement religious insights and even contribute to a sense of wonder for the marvels of water. Christian universities and research centers could promote studies and practices focusing on the question of environmental improvement. The Ministry of Water Resources has been conducting national painting competitions on water conservation for school children since 2010.²⁴ Christian educational institutions could actively engage school children to participate in these competitions and to eventually become creative and active agents of water conservation. There could also be education of the heart through catechesis, sacramental preparations, rituals, prayers, meditation, and mindfulness practices. Mindfulness can lead to creative ways to use water that retains its bounty and purity.

e. Inter-Religious Response

In each religious tradition, we can find both mystical and prophetic experiences and ideals. Despite diversity of faith, Indians share a common ground of suffering regarding the water crisis. Hence, there are many possibilities for fruitful collaboration.

²⁴ Ministry for Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation (Government of India), "Kid's Corner: Water Conservation," <http://wrmin.nic.in/forms/List.aspx?lid=1106&Id=6>, accessed on 17th September, 2015.

Thus, all religious traditions of India can enlist their prophetic powers to call for needed changes in water use and management, not only in powerful, prophetic statements but in such actions as boycotts, letter-writing campaigns, lobbying, research, and protests.²⁵ We all need to join and celebrate the efforts of activists diligently working to green the earth by practicing water democracy. We may recall the successful story of Rajendra Singh, the waterman, whose decades of hard work along with people living in the foothills of the rugged Aravallis in Rajasthan is reaping a rich water harvest today. The villages have more than enough water to last the entire year. Groundwater is available at five to six metres and the five dead rivers have become perennial. The transition from sacred texts, ritual practices, and observances to responsible actions toward the environment and water ought to be mediated by individuals and groups who themselves are committed to intimacy with the earth and water.

Conclusion

Contemporary India is in a precarious situation in terms of water. Inadequate access to clean drinking water and sanitation, increase in water-related diseases and disasters, competition for the resources among different sectors and regions, and the effects of climate change, are presenting daunting challenges to sustainable water-systems, ecosystems, and humanity itself. Exploring the causes and effects of the Indian water crisis, water-related practices, policies, programs, and possibilities, and examining the physical and chemical properties and behaviors of water, I have envisaged friendship with water as an adequate inter-religious response to the current crisis of water insecurity in India. May the life-giving power of water and the Spirit renew the face of the earth, bringing freshness and fecundity amidst the “crisis of existence” or the “cry-for-life” in India.

²⁵ In 2013, in Madhya Pradesh's Khandwa area, 51 people stayed immersed in water for the 14th day in what was being called a '*jalsatyagraha*' (Water Resistance). The protestors were demanding compensation and rehabilitation for villagers whose homes would be submerged under water after the state government's order of opening all the gates of the Omkareshwar dam.

The Motif of the Poor, the Widow and the Orphan

Selva Rathinam

In the atmosphere of suspicion on religions we need to get back to the substance of religions. Protection of the weak is at the core of every religion and especially in the Old Testament. There is a literary motif in the Old Testament of the widow, the orphan and the poor and this motif is already found in the Ancient Near East where the gods were concerned with justice to the poor and this has influenced the Old Testament's sensitivity towards justice. In the Pentateuch such motif is found in all the three Codes there. The prophets point out how the Israelites had betrayed God in neglecting the widow, the orphan and the poor. In the Poetical Books the criterion for judging whether one is a man or a woman of God is to see whether one takes up the cause of the weak. The reason for the prominence of the motif of the poor, the widow and the orphan is that in the Biblical tradition it is God who will serve as protector and family for those who have no other. The author Dr. Selva Rathinam S.J is the President, Jnana-Deepa Vidayapeeth, Pune.

Introduction

These days when religions are perceived with suspicion as sources of division, violence and enmity, we need to go back to the essence and the substance of religions which are like reconciliation, compassion and friendship. Orphanages, asylums and social action works by Christians, Hindus, Moslems, Sikhs and Parsees in India and all over the globe show that protection of the weak is at the core of every religion. An attempt is made in this paper to go to the origin of such disposition in the Bible and especially in the Old Testament. The protection of the weak in this paper refers mainly to widows, orphans and the poor. This can be expanded to other marginalized groups such

as dalits, tribals, women, children, ecology, LGBT and others. Although protection of the weak is an important virtue in any religion it cannot be left solely to the discretion of the individual. The legal corpus on this in the Bible and other Ancient Near Eastern regions show a collective structural decision on this is paramount importance.

I. Ancient Near East

There is a well-known literary motif, in the Old Testament of the widow, the orphan and the poor. The ubiquitous nature of the motif is already found in the Ancient Near East,¹ and its form and content are well utilized by the writers of the Old Testament. Richard D. Patterson cites its occurrences in the Ancient Near East and how its influence is seen in the Old Testament.²

The Fertile Crescent of the Ancient Near East consists of three important regions: Mesopotamia, Egypt and Syro-Palestine. In Mesopotamia there are three well-known Law Codes. One is that of Urukagina in the twenty-fifth century B.C and another one is that of Ur Nammu in the twenty-first century B.C and the third one is that of Hammurabi in the eighteenth century B.C. The first two belong to the Ancient Sumerians and both of them speak in detail of the protection of the widow, the orphan, and the poor. The third one clearly states that justice is what you do to the poor, the widow and the orphan³ (see Is 1:17). How is justice related to the trio? In Mesopotamia the sun god *shamash* is the god of justice⁴ who takes care of the poor, the

¹ F. Charles Fensham, "Widow, Orphan, and the Poor in Ancient Near Eastern Legal and Wisdom Literature," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, XXI (April, 1962), 129-39.

² Richard D. Patterson, "The Widow, Orphan, and the Poor in the Old Testament and the Extra-Biblical Literature," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (July, 1973), 222-34.

³ See Richard D. Patterson, "The Widow, Orphan, and the Poor," 220. Here the author substantiates it from E. Bergmann, *Codex Hammurabi: Textus Primigenius* (Rome, 1953).

⁴ Sun brings light and warmth to the land, allowing plants and crops to grow. As the sun fills the entire sky with light, *shamash* oversaw everything that occurred during the daytime. He thus became the god of truth, judgments and justice.

widow and the orphan. In Mesopotamia the king is considered to be the adopted son of god and therefore the ideal king is one who represents this god by taking care of the poor and needy in the society (see Zach 6:1).⁵ In Egypt, too the kings like Ramesses III boast that by paying attention to justice, they take care of the poor, the widow and the orphan.⁶ The sun-god, Re, in Egypt was regarded the protector of the weak. In Syro-Palestine also we see, for example, the two royal figures in the city of Ugarit are associated with taking care of the poor, the widow and the orphan. One is Daniel who, according to the Epic of Aqhat, sits before the gate and judges the cause of the widows and the fatherless (see Amos 5:15); and the other is king Keret who is a negative example in which it is narrated that when he was in his sick bed his son confronts him saying that he did not judge the cause of the poor, the widow and the orphan.⁷

II. Old Testament

The very same motif of the poor, the widow and the orphan is found in the Old Testament. Here the ideal king is presented as a good shepherd type of king (Ezek 34) who demonstrates his concern for the poor, the widow and the orphan. While in the Ancient Near Eastern regions laws were made by the ruling class like Ur Nammu or Hammurabi, in Israel not even once a lawgiver is mentioned and Yahweh is the only lawgiver for Israel and therefore Yahweh has no favourites except, perhaps, the marginalized.⁸ The name of the Hebrew Bible is

⁵ In Zach 6:1 Zacharia saw “four chariots coming out from between two mountains-mountains of bronze.” In Judah, chariots and horses were used as icons for the worship of the sun (2 Kgs 23:11). In Mesopotamia shamash was depicted appearing between two mountains, depicting graphically the rising sun, which are themselves placed inside two open doors of the heaven. The two mountains could be the two bronze pillars placed before the temple (1 Kgs 7:15-22). For the above explanation, see David L. Petersen, *Haggai and Zachariah 1-8: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), 268.

⁶ See F. Charles Fensham, “Widow, Orphan, and the Poor,” 133.

⁷ See Richard D. Patterson, “The Widow, Orphan, and the Poor,” 227.

⁸ Rui de Menezes, *Portrait of Ancient Israel* (Mumbai: St Paul Press, 2009), 118-121.

TaNaK. TaNaK is an acronym of the first Hebrew letter of the three subdivisions: Torah, Nabiim and Ketubim. We see in all these three subdivisions the motif of the poor, the widow and the orphan.

A. The Pentateuch

There are three codes⁹ in the Pentateuch: Covenant Code, Holiness Code and Deuteronomic Code. All of them have the concern for the poor, the widow and the orphan.

1. Covenant Code

These are the customary laws (*mishpatim*) usually unwritten unlike statutes (*huqqim*) which are engraved. Ex 20:22-23:33 has been given the name, 'the book of the covenant' (Ex 24:7) and it is like a code with a prologue (Ex 20:22-26) and an epilogue (Ex 23:20-33). The majority of them pertain to the social field.

a. The Marginalized

As we are going to see in the following pages there are three categories of the marginalized and the laws concerning them are mentioned in the Covenant Code.¹⁰ The first category is the poor mentioned as *oni* (Ex 22:25) or *ebyon* (Ex 23:6). *Oni* comes from the verb *anah* which means to humiliate, to subjugate and even to rape. *Anaw/anawim* is its cognate word which in postexilic times acquired a theological meaning of those Israelites who utterly dependent on Yahweh. The second category of the marginalized are orphan (*yatom*) and the widow (*almana*). The orphan does not have a father to protect his or her rights and the widow has no husband (*ba'al*) to defend her especially in the patriarchal society (see Mk 12:40). The last category is the alien (*ger*). It comes from the verb *gur* which means to stay rather than to live and therefore the *ger* has no citizenship rights. The word *ger* is distinguished from *nokri* which means a gentile or a total foreigner. Deuteronomy will add one more to all these, the *Levites* who lost their means of livelihood after King Josiah abolished the local sanctuaries during his reform.¹¹

⁹ I leave out 'Priestly Code' as it exclusively deals with 'Cultic Laws.'

¹⁰ Rui de Menezes, *Portrait of Ancient Israel*, 118-122.

¹¹ Rui de Menezes, *Portrait of Ancient Israel*, 120.

b. Laws in favour of the Poor

i. Interest free loan should be given to the poor Israelite (Ex 22:25; cf. Dt 23:19).

ii. In the lawsuits when one of the persons is poor, one should not pervert the justice due to the poor (*ebyon*) (Ex 23:6).

iii. If one takes the cloak of a poor person in pawn it should be returned before sunset for him to use it as cover to sleep or else the appeal of the poor to Yahweh will land the oppressor in trouble since Yahweh, the compassionate one (*hannun*) listens to the cry of the poor (Ex 22:26-27; cf. Dt 22:10-15).

iv. The Sabbath and the sabbatical year (Fallow year, so that the poor might draw benefit from it Ex 23:10-12) are meant to give the poor rest and a means of livelihood (cf. Dt 15:1-11 where the sabbatical year will become the Year for the remission of debts).

c. Laws concerning the Widow and the Orphan

The law demands that the Israelites should not abuse (*anah*) them lest they cry out (*tsa'aq*) to Yahweh and Yahweh would do justice to them and make widows of the oppressors' wives and orphans of their children (Ex 22:22-24).

d. Laws concerning the Alien

Here the appeal is made to Israel's experience of having been an alien in Egypt to forbid the molesting (*yanah*) or oppressing (*lahats*) of the alien (Ex 22:21; 23:9).

Thus, we can sum up that the concern for the marginalized in Covenant Code is mostly found in the covenant context. Two reasons are spelt out here why the marginalized should be taken care of. One is an appeal to their experience. God reminds the Israelites that they were immigrants (*ger*) at one time in the land of Egypt (Ex 22:21; see also Dt 10:19; 16:12; 24:18, 22; Lev 19:34) and therefore they should respond to the vulnerable with kindness; and the second is that God is on the side of the vulnerable and he will act on behalf of the vulnerable (Ex 22:22-24) as an advocate (Is 3:13-15). Therefore, God's blessings will rest upon us only when we show concern for the marginalized.

2. Deuteronomic Code (Dt 12-26)

In addition to the reasons given by Covenant Code (experience as an alien and the God of the oppressed) Deuteronomy adds few more. God is the supreme Judge who judges the cause of the poor, the widow, the orphan and the strangers (Dt 10:18). The concern towards the Levites, immigrant, the widow and the orphan in the offering of the tithes during the three pilgrim feasts of the Unleavened, the harvest and the In gathering feasts shows that the marginalized should be treated as God with dignity. The tithes are set apart for God at the altar and in actuality when the tithes are distributed to the marginalized the offerer is expected to treat them with dignity as God (Dt 16:9-20; 14:28-29). Finally, the Deuteronomic Code shows that a number of specific measures were designed to institutionalize protection for the economically vulnerable as shown below.¹²

a. Covenant

First of all they were all exhorted to be faithful to the covenant with Yahweh. At the base of the covenant we see an egalitarian order. The Jubilee provisions for the relaxation of debts (Dt 15; cf. Lev 25) were aimed at preventing accumulation of land in few hands and the consequent disempowerment of the dispossessed (Dt 15:1-3).

b. Kings

The people in authority like kings should have strict limits on the rights and powers in leading a life of simplicity (not accumulating a vast amount of silver and gold), chastity (not having a great number of wives) and obedience (making a copy of the law and reading it to obey it) (Dt 17:16-19).

c. The custom of leaving the gleanings

The custom of leaving the gleanings of field and vine for the poor (Dt 24:19-22). All the above shows that there is an intimate relationship between Israel's relationship with Yahweh and the organization of its economic, political and social life which take the side of the marginalized.

¹² Anthony R. Ceresko, *Introduction to the Old Testament: A Liberation Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 116-118.

3. Holiness Code (Lev 17-26)

It contains 10 chapters and among them three chapters (18, 19 and 25) pertain to the social sphere.

a. *Sabbatical Year and Jubilee Year*

Here as in the Book of the Covenant, the land is to lie fallow. Then it says that “it shall be a year of complete rest (*shabbat shabbaton*) for the land” (Lev 25:4-5). The marginalized as well as the domestic and wild animals are to benefit from it (Lev 25:6-7). In Jubilee year which is the fiftieth year the trumpet will be sounded on the Day of atonement (*yom hakkipurim*) to proclaim liberation (*deror*) for all the inhabitants of the land. Not only the land will lie fallow and the debts are cancelled as in Deuteronomic Code, so that, each will return to his ancestral home but going beyond Deuteronomy it says that even mortgaged land returns to the owner (Lev 25:8-17). In fact, the proclamation of ‘liberation’ (*deror*) comes very close to general amnesty practiced when a new ruler took up the rule in the Ancient Near East and the Lord’s anointed brings such good news of liberty (*deror*) to captives in Isaiah 61:1.¹³

b. *Laws dealing with Social Justice (Lev 19)*¹⁴

In this chapter we see the law on the love of the neighbour which Jesus took it up (Mk 12:29-31; Rom 13:9; Gal 5:14; James 2:8). This chapter calls the Israelites to love their neighbour in thought, word and action. The first is to love others with our words. It is not enough to be polite outside and full of rage inside but “you shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin...you shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself” (Lev 19:17-18). Thus, it calls for affective love towards the other. The second is to love others with our words (19:11-12). This passage gives two contexts: business and courtroom. When the passage

¹³ Rui de Menezes, *Portrait of Ancient Israel*, 139.

¹⁴ Kevin DeYoung, “Social Justice and the Poor (2),” *The Gospel Coalition* (August 28, 2009), in <http://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/kevindeyoung/2009/08/28/social-justice-and-poor-2/> accessed on 26/11/2015.

says 'do not steal' (Lev 19:11) the context seems to be business setting where the stealing is done by lying. In contrast, one should love the other by telling the truth in transactions. Secondly in those days when there were no surveillance cameras or DNA testing or tape recording and everything depended on witnesses, false witness became a serious crime where someone's life could be literally ruined by a simple lie.¹⁵ Therefore, the second scene of the courtroom demands our carefulness with our words. The third is to love others in deeds (Lev 19:9-10). These verses summarize the concept of gleaning, leaving some of the harvest remaining in the fields, so that, the poor and the immigrant can gather what is left over. The concept of gleaning here requires not only generosity on the part of the landowner but also industry on the part of the poor (although there is a place for a hand out, too). The principle here is that God's people should deliberately plan their financial lives so that the extra left over is given to the needy. Not to reap to the edge of the fields means not to spend all our money on ourselves but to think of those who have less than ours and let some of our wealth slip through our fingers.

In all these things, the Holiness Code does not go beyond advocating love to its own Israelite society. At the most it includes the resident alien (*ger*) (Lev 19:34) but does not reach out to the gentiles (*nokri*). We need to wait for Jesus of Nazareth to propound love the whole of humanity (cf. Lk 6:27-36; 10:25-37).

B. The Prophets

The prophets point out how the Israelites had betrayed God in ill treating and neglecting the widow, the orphan and the poor (Is 1:23; 10:1-2; Jer 7:4-16; Exek 22:6-7). For Hosea, for example, "one cannot claim to have experienced God as a covenant partner if one does not maintain the same relationship with one's fellow human partner."¹⁶ The two instances (Hos 4:1 and 6:6) where the phrase 'knowledge of God' appears seem to make this claim pretty clear. In the first instance (Hos 4:1-3) the transgression of the covenant relationship with God

¹⁵ Kevin DeYoung, "Social Justice and the Poor (2)."

¹⁶ Rui de Menezes, *Voices from Beyond* (Mumbai: St Paul's Publication, 2005), 112.

takes place (no faithfulness, no loyal love) when the relationship between fellow Israelites is broken (swearing, lying, murder etc.,). In the second instance the 'steadfast love' is in parallel to 'knowledge of God' and therefore the meaning of this phrase is to be sought in covenant relationship. For Hosea 'knowledge of God' means an 'experience of God.' The experience of Yahweh as a covenant partner should lead one to treat a fellow Israelite as a covenant partner who is to be protected, supported and defended; but instead one sees only mutual exploitation.¹⁷ Because of her sins God will punish Israel (Is 9:16-17) and Israel herself will become a widow (Zech 7:8-14). Jeremiah, too, makes a similar lament (Lam 1:1; 5:2-3). When Israel does justice by taking care of the oppressed, the orphan and the widow (Is 1:17) her sins will be washed away and she will become clean (Is 1:16-18). Then, she will be restored from her widowhood and orphanhood (Is 54:4-5; Hos 14:1-4).¹⁸

C. The Poetical Books

1. Job

According to the book of Job, the evil man is one who oppresses the widow, the orphan and the poor (14:1-4, 14, 21). When Job is accused by Eliphaz that he has "sent widows away empty and the arms of the fatherless have been broken" (22:9), Job denies it and swears under oath that he is free of any such evil doings (29:11-17; 31:16-17, 21-23).

2. Psalms

The Psalmist praises God's righteous character because he is "a father of the fatherless and a judge of the widows" (Ps 68:5). In Psalm 82 justice and Monotheism are connected. Here only Yahweh is portrayed as God because he can claim just rule and the other gods are condemned to death for their failure to carry out justice which consists of protecting the rights of the weak. Therefore, the criterion for judging whether one is a man or a woman of God is to see whether one takes up the cause of the weak!

¹⁷ Rui de Menezes, *Voices from Beyond*, 111.

¹⁸ See Richard D. Patterson, "The Widow, Orphan, and the Poor," 232.

3. Proverbs

a. Concern for the Poor

Proverbs lays great stress on the concern for the Poor. "Happy are those who are kind to the poor (*anawim*)" (Prov 14:21). "Those who oppress the poor (*dal*) insult their Maker, but those who are kind to the needy (*ebyon*) honor him" (Prov 14:31). "Whoever is kind to the poor (*dal*), lends to the Lord, and will be repaid in full" (Prov 19:17). "One who augments wealth by exorbitant interest gathers it for another who is kind to the poor (*dallim*)" (Prov 28:8). "Those who are generous are blessed for they share their bread with the poor (*dal*)" (Prov 22:9). Note the different words for 'poor' in the Hebrew.

b. The Rights of the Poor

Four proverbs deal with this topic. The word for 'rights' (*din*) is the same in all and it is not the usual word for 'rights' (*mishpat*) although the meaning is the same. "The righteous know (*yada*) the rights (*din*) of the poor (*dallim*)" (Prov 29:7). The next three instances are to be found in the Sayings of King Lemuel of Massa (Prov 31:1-9). Here the mother of King Lemuel reminds her son of his duties as king. To vindicate the rights of the poor is the chief duty of the king in the Ancient Near East.¹⁹ "What really interests us here is...the traditional Israelite teaching which has its roots in the covenant theology, whereby all Israelites, be they rich or poor, as members of the covenant, are equal before the Law. Any infringement of the rights of the poor will be avenged by the covenantal God."²⁰

"It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine or for rulers to desire strong drink, or else they will drink and forget what has been decreed, and will pervert the rights (*din*) of the afflicted (*oni*)" (Prov 31:4-5).

"Speak out (*petah pika*) for those who cannot speak (*le' illem*) for the rights (*din*) of all the destitute (*halop*). Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights (*din*) of the poor (*oni*) and needy (*ebyon*)" (Prov 31:8-9).

¹⁹ See Rui de Menezes, *Wisdom Traditions of Israel* (Mumbai: St Paul's Publication, 2013), 86.

²⁰ Rui de Menezes, *Wisdom Traditions of Israel*, 86-87.

Lemuel's mother advises her son not to take up to drinking lest he neglects his duty of addressing the question of the rights of the weak. A literal translation of Prov 31:8 would be "open your mouth for the dumb." Can it be true that the widespread ever increasing culture of drinking in our hierarchical Church leadership in India neglects our duty of opening our mouth for the dumb and taking the cause of the rights of the weak?

"Throughout the Old Testament, then, the cause of the widow, the orphan, and the poor is particularly enjoined upon Israel as befitting a redeemed people who are entrusted with the character and standards of their Redeemer."²¹

D. Reason for the prominence of the motif of the poor, the widow and the orphan²²

Traditionally the parents instruct the children with regard to the strangers as saying "don't talk to strangers." But the crime statistics show that the greatest threat of violence to children and to adults like murder, kidnap, assault and sexual abuse come not from the stranger but from the hands of an acquaintance, although the random act of stranger-to-stranger violence receives a disproportionate share of media attention. The Hebrew word *ger* for resident alien may have roots in other Hebrew and Akkadian words meaning "to attack," "to be hostile," and "to be afraid." But who is being hostile to whom? Who is experiencing the fear? Although the presence of a stranger might produce anxiety among the non acquaintance, the alien is more in a position of vulnerability. The visions of horrors which may come in the wake of aliens are fed by racist stereotypes. In ancient Israel, too, the *ger* could have been both subject and object of fear. The refugees were driven out of their homelands by war or famine or crimes (e.g., Ruth 1:1). No matter what, the aliens were vulnerable people who did

²¹ Richard D. Patterson, "The Widow, Orphan, and the Poor," 232.

²² See Lee Griffith, *The War on Terrorism and the Terror of God* (Michigan/Cambridge: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 69-71. I depend fully on this book for developing this part of the paper.

not have social or economic security as they had been severed from any family or property support. Therefore, aliens are cited alongside widows and orphans (Ex 22:21-22; Jer 22:3) as *personae miserae* who are cut off from family. Who, then, will serve as family to these people who are both feared and frightened? The Biblical tradition tells that it is God who will serve as protector and family for those who have no other. In Hebrew society the one who has become so poor so as to fall into servitude was to be redeemed by the next of kin known as the *go'el* (redeemer). The Sabbath and Jubilee Year proclaim that God served as *Go'el* for those who had no one to redeem them and he had paid the price for their freedom already when God led all out of captivity in Egypt. Therefore God would serve as *go'el* for the alien, the Levites, the widows and orphans. They must receive a portion of tithe (Dt 14:28-29; 26:11-13) and must be allowed to glean the fields (Dt 24:19-21).

Conclusion

In our Church and civil administration circles at times cultic and religious issues like the clerical dress, communion in the hand, the issue of the rites and beef eating tend to take on a significance much higher than what they really deserve and whereas the problem of social justice in a country where the majority live below the poverty line takes a back seat.²³ In the Indian churches we speak a lot about the poor and the marginalized. Although academically we have got well developed 'dalit theology,' 'feminist theology,' 'Tribal theology,' and 'subaltern theology' they have not contributed much to bring about a practical change within the Church. In practice, caste, gender and economic discriminations still prevail within our Church. How to bridge the gap between the theory and the practice? First of all, although the women, the dalits and the tribals constitute the majority within the Church, we still preach, teach and theologize in solidarity with 'them,' making the marginalized 'the objects' rather than 'the subjects.' Secondly, we need inclusive rather than exclusive structure of change which includes all (even non-marginalized) people of good will. Thirdly, in India we work on borrowed models based on the one hand the triumphalistic Exodus model of Latin American Liberation Theology or Black Theology or

on the other hand a worm theology of the Suffering Servant model which glorifies suffering to the extent of leading one to submissive passivity. We need to tap other models like the universal blessing of the Patriarch or the reconciliation model of Jacob and Esau (instead of conflict models), or the negotiation model of Syro-Phoenician woman and Jesus or Martha-Mary model of resisting the blame game etc., In short, we need creative models to befriend the other.

²³ Rui de Menezes, *Portrait of Ancient Israel*, 143-44.

Growing as a Person: From Befriending the Self to Befriending the Other

Keith D'Souza

Growing as a person often entails a long journey from befriending the self to befriending the other. This journey may be depicted in terms of a wide spectrum that consists of numerous states of awareness. One pole of the spectrum is an extreme form of self-absorption, while the other pole is an expansive sense of being other-oriented. There are three broad ranges of awareness on this spectrum: befriending the self, befriending others largely within one's community and befriending others beyond one's community. Personal growth is an ongoing task and challenge, in order that higher ranges of this spectrum may gradually characterize the general state of one's consciousness. For this to happen, there is need for adequate situational or contextual grounds for growth to thrive, as well as the need for personal discernment, so that higher levels of awareness are experienced at a greater frequency, intensity and duration. The author Dr. Keith D'Souza S.J. is Professor of St. Pius X College, Mumbai.

Introduction

Human growth entails a long and often tedious journey involving many elements: discovering oneself, relating with others, living in community and being open to transcendent realities and values. Living a wholesome human life thus entails some form of success in processing intrapersonal, interpersonal, communitarian and transcendent experiences in a salubrious manner.

This article will focus on what it takes to live a wholesome personal life, in the larger context of the human, cosmic and divine world. The main thesis proposed is that an optimal trajectory or hierarchy of states of growth extends from a basic mode of befriending oneself at a lower

extreme, towards ultimate human fulfillment in some self-transcendent form of befriending the 'other,' at a more refined and wholesome extreme. The operative presupposition is that optimal personal growth needs to factor in community concerns and relationships, as well as the larger cosmic and divine world of meaning and value.

We will first consider a few of the more obvious features - or general conditions or observations - related to the theme of personal growth. We will then identify a few of the more necessary normative principles that govern growth, keeping in mind that personal growth needs to take into account larger realities such as communitarian, global, cosmic and divine dimensions. The main feature of the article then follows, viz., a presentation of ten states of consciousness which delineate this range of possible levels of growth. A brief clarification and explanation of this apparently linear progression of these states of consciousness then follows.

1. Primary Facets of Personal Growth

There are many features and aspects related to the theme of personal growth. Some are more central, while some may be considered to be more peripheral. I will present some of the more obvious features or characteristics of personal growth, as a necessary background in order to understand more adequately the nature and status of the states of consciousness which represent increasingly more wholesome ways of being human.

1.1. Personal Growth is a Mystery

The journey from being born a human animal towards the realization of the fullness of being human may be best described as a "mystery." It does not require much observation or research to realize that while some persons make easy leaps and bounds in terms of growth, others find growth to be an extremely slow and even painful process.

While specific professions, programmes and processes oriented towards personal growth seem to abound, growth is not something that can be mechanically or systematically induced.¹ One of the main

¹ Besides professional spiritual directors, counselors, psychologists and

theses in Gerald May's insightful book titled, *Simply Sane*,² is that professional exercises geared towards engineering personal growth do not typically meet with expected success. This is not for want of good expertise on the part of the diverse professionals employed, but rather because of the nature of the object under consideration and exploration, viz., the human person. The person is more a mystery to be understood wisely, rather than a problem to be examined, explained and experimented with statistically or scientifically.³

Those who appear to be delinquent or deviant may often show signs of growth under more salubrious conditions and circumstances,⁴ while those who appear to be more integrated and centred may likely have arrived at this point in their personal journeys after long personal and social struggles. This is in keeping with the popular adage that "saints have a past, and sinners have a future." Even the best human beings are influenced by what some theorists like Jung refer to as "shadow" dimensions of the self.⁵ There are aspects to human existence that do not easily fit into the categorizations that one understandably employs in the human or social sciences.

psychiatrists, the number of "life coaches" - especially in urban, materially developed contexts - is increasing exponentially, hardly meeting the need and demand of those who are willing to pay exorbitant amounts for the therapeutic mentoring exercises offered by these experts.

² See Gerald May, *Simply Sane: The Spirituality of Mental Health*, 2nd ed. (NY: Crossroad, 1993).

³ See also Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, Vol. 1, (Chicago: Charles Regnery Co, 1951), 149, where Marcel asserts that, "we must reject the idea of there actually being a legitimate answer, an objectively valid answer, to the question: 'Who am I?' . . . [It is] a riddle that, at the human level, simply cannot be solved: it is a question that does not imply, and cannot imply, any plain answer."

⁴ This is the wisdom in having growth-oriented remedial programmes in places of incarceration, so that prison inmates may look towards a humane life after serving their term.

⁵ See Francois O'Kane, *Sacred Chaos: Reflections on God's Shadow and the Dark Self* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1994), which is an application of Jung's understanding of the shadow to human, and even to divine life.

When growth is forced towards specific objectives, tragic results may be generated, especially in cases of forced socialization or brainwashing.⁶ This often happens in social movements which are ultra right in conviction and orientation. Such programmes and processes often result in violent forms of social expression, and often do untold damage to persons who come within their ambit and influence. This is because the human person cannot be reduced to the same status as an object in the natural realm, or a merely passive recipient of programmes of indoctrination.

1.2. Growth is Contextually Influenced

While there is no doubt that personal growth remains a mystery, it is also quite evident that salubrious social contexts undeniably aid the progress of growth, especially during the first few years of human development. Healthy economic, political and cultural factors are very important as supportive conditions for personal growth. On the other hand, social discrimination and marginalization based on gender, race, class, caste, religion, etc., all have a very important part to play in stunting human growth. A girl child growing up in a heavily patriarchal society hostile to female development has much more of a hurdle to face than one growing up in more egalitarian cultural contexts.

Besides culturally discriminatory and oppressive forces, political instability, economic uncertainty, forced migration and war - all of these leading to physical hardship, deprivation and violence - constitute even more severe conditions for human wellbeing to take place. Some human beings have a privileged start - especially a vast majority of those in materially developed nations - so experience better conditions for growth to take place effortlessly and steadily. However, there is no guarantee that those who live in healthier social climates will *ipso facto* experience better growth trajectories.

⁶ Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann point out to possibilities of brainwashing in the context of the differentiation between primary and secondary socialization. See *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Penguin, 1966), 149 ff.

1.3. Growth Requires Personal Effort

While extraneous circumstances have a lot to contribute towards the growth of individuals, the disposition and effort that the individual invests in his or her own development has perhaps the most part to play in personal growth. At the beginning of the human journey, unlike other animals, the human animal requires a lot of attention merely for physical survival. At later stages of the human journey, this extraneous support needs to be mirrored by an internal support process, involving consistency and tenacity of effort, resilience or the ability to bounce back from adverse situations.

There are numerous examples of individuals who have suffered tremendous social hardships, yet have bounced back in order to make a personal success of their lives as well as to productively contribute to society. Hence, social context is not the sole category which determines a trajectory of growth. Besides social conditions, individual differentiation has a large part to play when it comes to personal growth. Most parents will easily agree that while the social resources placed at the service of their children were very similar, each sibling turned out quite differently from the others. This is the psychological and spiritual challenge to sociological, anthropological and statistical generalizations. This is also in continuity with thesis 1.1.above, viz., that personal growth is a mystery and not something that can be easily mastered or even fully comprehended.

1.4. Growth may be Measured by Different Parameters

The issue of personal growth is a highly contentious one, with different schools abounding in different social or human sciences, each of them proposing competing parameters or criteria by which growth may be measured. Among the more well-known theories of personal development are the psychodynamic theory proposed by Freud and developed by Erik Erikson, and the cognitive-structuralist theory proposed by Jean Piaget and developed by Lawrence Kohlberg.⁷ While

⁷ See R. Murray Thomas, *Moral Development Theories - Secular and Religious* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), for a summary description of various theories dealing with human development, from a secular as well as religious point of view.

some theories give more importance to the experiences of early childhood, others give importance to cognitive capacities, while yet others pay more attention to social adaptability and capacity building, such as the cultivation of emotional and social intelligence. This divergent approach is mirrored by different cultural estimations with regard to how human beings ought to manifest growth patterns. Some cultures give more importance to conformity with traditional practices, while others value independence and autonomy at an early age of adulthood. Among the former, which stress the communitarian dimension, are tribal or indigeneous societies - and also a growing tendency among right-wing ideologues and activists, which some attribute to a reaction against globalization. Other cultures, which are more influenced by urban and capitalistic lifestyles and attitudes, favour individualism and personal autonomy as more authentic indicators of growth. The former or more traditional focus highlights what the person owes to his or her society, while the latter or more liberal focus highlights what the person achieves or contributes to society, by way of creativity, enterprise and risk.

2. Normative Principles Governing Personal Growth

Determining the criteria governing the issue of personal growth or "human development" is a complex and sometimes contentious process. Among the diverse theoretical schools dealing with personal development, the psychologically influenced ones give importance to personal dimensions of growth, while the sociologically influenced ones give importance to social relatedness and productivity and the spiritually influenced ones give importance to sensitivity towards transcendent and divine reality.

In this exercise we move from the descriptive realm of the 'is' to the prescriptive or normative realm of the 'ought.' While proposing norms - and later, a hierarchy of states of consciousness based on these norms - for determining personal growth, I have taken into consideration various psychological, social, moral and spiritual aptitudes requisite for integral and ongoing development.

At the *personal level*, primary among the indicators of growth is integrity, or having and living by strong and upright moral principles

and convictions. This requires emotional and spiritual intelligence and depth. Reliability and consistency of character is a strong indicator of integrity. When these principles and convictions are increasingly autonomous and not only dependent on social convention or pressure, the quality of integrity gets even more refined. Besides integrity, an important quality is resilience, or the ability to bounce back from adverse circumstances. Resilience is generally founded upon a core optimistic or positive outlook towards life. Finally, persons of integrity may be relied upon as being responsible for tasks assigned to them. Also, such persons assume responsibility for their actions and their outcomes, and do not easily attribute blame to others or social situations.

At the *interpersonal level*, integrity is manifested in honesty or truthfulness in communication. The principle of the Golden Rule - present in diverse forms in various cultures and religions - is adhered to, with mutuality and justice given a high premium in relationships. Beyond duty and justice, a spirit of sensitivity and compassion, and a concomitant valuation of mercy above justice are further indicators of a heightened quality of interpersonal relationships.

At the *social level*, personal and professional transparency is esteemed, associated with the value of accountability. The desire to contribute productively to society - and to "give back," especially from a situation of privilege - is also given a high premium. Establishing a social situation that features fraternity and harmony within one's primary communities and with persons of other communities in general is also valued. The idea of the "common good" takes precedence over the narrow, privatized idea of the "individual good."

Finally, at the *trans-human and trans-social level*, respect for nature and natural resources is increasingly gaining ground as a moral imperative today. Beyond and beneath this, a sensitivity, receptivity and collaborative disposition towards the presence and working of transcendent and ultimate spiritual realities are also important factors in furthering personal growth.

3. States of Growth

Growing as a person may ideally be depicted in terms of a trajectory that consists of numerous states of awareness. One pole of the

trajectory is an extreme form of self-absorption, while the other pole is an expansive sense of being other-oriented. Beyond a deficient or dysfunctional state of existence in which one is not able to even befriend oneself, there are three broad spectrums of awareness on this trajectory: befriending the self, befriending others within one's community (being at home within one's community's horizon of meaning and purpose) and befriending others beyond one's community (being at home with communities and concerns that transcend one's own and one's community's horizon of meaning and purpose).⁸

3.1. Individually Focused Growth: Befriending the Self

Befriending oneself is not as easy as it seems, given the stresses and strains of family and social life. A primal, yet prevalent state of existence that many human beings find difficult to transcend is that of a nagging self-doubt, self-pity and even self-loathing. Beneath these sentiments lies a range of emotions such as fear, shame and unhealthy guilt. In these circumstances, it is difficult to befriend even oneself, leave aside the other. This state of existence may be characterized as *phobic*, as many of the emotions experienced are related to some form of fear or anxiety.⁹ Psychoanalytic theorists pay special attention to early childhood experiences - especially related to different forms of fear - to help explain later dispositions and behaviour patterns. However, besides personal wounded memories and lack of opportunities for freedom and flourishing, there may be various oppressive social

⁸ See Keith D'Souza, "Levels of Existential Development," in *The Dynamics of Development: Negations and Negotiations*, ed. Keith D'Souza (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2014), 301-23, for a philosophically-based schema of these ten states of consciousness, and Keith D'Souza, "Living Faith in a Postmodern World: Principles and Phases of Faith Development" in *The Quality of Adult Faith*, ed. Cleophas Fernandes (Bangalore: NBCLC, 2015), 184-208, for a theologically and religiously-based schema of these states.

⁹ While the emotions of shame, guilt and grief are apparently discrete from that of anxiety or fear, all of these emotions in some way stem from the imagined possibility of losing something valuable: name and status (in the case of shame), integrity (in the case of guilt) and a significant or prized relationship (in the case of grief).

situations which cause phobia: economic uncertainty, political strife, cultural marginalization - all of these are factors which do not easily allow people to go beyond this dysfunctional state of consciousness.

The most basic manner of befriending oneself may at first be manifested in *egotistic* or severely self-centred, narcissistic behaviour. This may seem personally and socially dysfunctional, but it is somewhat better than being plagued by powerful negative forces (at the *phobic* level) that leave one psycho-spiritually scarred and crippled.¹⁰ While narcissism may have its origins in personal life narratives, it may also be caused by strong cultural factors. For example, living in a strong capitalistic milieu naturally gives rise to a spirit of competition for goods and services. In such situations, educational institutions and corporate industries encourage pitting oneself against others in diverse fields of productive enterprises.

The next state beyond the egotistic may be termed the *aesthetic*, in the limited and technical sense in which Kierkegaard uses it as a primal or basic stage of human flourishing.¹¹ This state of consciousness corresponds to a life driven by the pursuits of varied pleasures. There is a need to get out of one's skin in order to engage with the larger world, even though this engagement may largely be characterized by instrumental relationships. It is important to differentiate this form of aestheticism from a higher form of aesthetic enjoyment, in which the focus is not the self but rather the aesthetic object in itself - or even better, the aesthetic experience, which goes beyond subject-object duality.

¹⁰ According to Francoise O'Kane, in *Sacred Chaos*, 15, "those symptoms and reactions described as characteristic of a narcissistic personality can also be viewed from a different perspective: they are part of an attempt at survival, a way for the individual to confront despair over a life that, for whatever reason, has been dominated by shadow and destruction."

¹¹ Besides the *aesthetic* or pleasure-oriented stage (exemplified by Don Juan and Faust), the more advanced stages are the *ethical* (exemplified by Socrates) and the *religious* (exemplified by Abraham). See Soren Kierkegaard, *Stages Along Life's Way*, trans. Walter Lowrie (NY: Schocken Books, 1967) and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, ed. and trans. Howard Hong and Edna Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ Press, 1992), for a description of these three types of stages.

Beyond the pursuit of pleasure, perhaps the best state of awareness within the limited spectrum of “befriending the self” is that of *authentic* living, understood as strategically planning and achieving one’s personal goals, and thus satisfying one’s ambitions in life. Some forms of existentialist thought which advocate authenticity - and in a different light, contemporary corporate culture which encourages personal achievement and success - foster this self-oriented outcome of personal choices and achievement as a wholesome goal of human existence. While the thought of the early Heidegger may well represent the ideal of authenticity from an existentialist perspective,¹² the objectivist philosophy of Ayn Rand may best represent the wisdom of living from this type of consciousness at the social, corporate and even ideological level.¹³

When egotism, aesthetic pleasure and personal success are relativized in terms of a more important and wider value or focus, then one’s consciousness automatically moves to a higher realm. This may be either furthering the interests of a community or communities with which one is identified, or even beyond, manifesting a concern about the larger human community or the trans-human realm of meaning and value.

3.2. Community-Focused Growth:

Befriending the Other as Self

Growing as a person can hardly come to a terminus by merely fulfilling self-oriented goals. The impetus to befriend oneself needs to graduate to a higher level, to include befriending those with whom one shares common interests, a common vision and purpose of life, shared community practices, a collective cultural and religious background, etc. However, while affirming all of these commonalities, there is a movement to befriend the other to a large extent because the other mirrors - or is viewed as an extension of - the self. This type of awareness may then be properly termed, “befriending the other *as self*.”

¹² See Heidegger’s depiction of authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*) in *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (NY: Harper and Row, 1962).

¹³ See Ayn Rand, *For the New Intellectual* (NY: Penguin, 1963), for a good overview of her philosophical position advocating individual flourishing.

Within this broad spectrum of “befriending the other as self,” there are at least three types of awareness. The most basic level is an *organic* awareness, in which one recognizes the need for social, legal and institutional order and one’s place in such a shared order. Middle order managers, or those who desire to see that everything is in order and that the system runs smoothly are those who especially appreciate such a consciousness. Such a consciousness also features as a default initial state of mind for a majority of tribal or indigenous communities the world over, in which a collective sense of belonging is valued far above individual attention, pleasure or achievement.

Beyond this basic affirmation of a commonly ordered life is a more refined *moralistic* awareness, where one is convinced of and reifies core moral - and often religious - values associated with law and order. Most culturally and religiously based traditional societies lay great emphasis on the cultivation of such a consciousness. However, there may also be dysfunctional forms of operating from this consciousness, e.g., that which is found among right wing groups, be they religiously bigoted, narrowly nationalistic or culturally chauvinistic.¹⁴

When one is able to relativize and transcend the narrow observance of the law for its own sake - and for a greater social or moral good - this leads to a more radical understanding of befriending the other. Such a disposition may be termed *empathetic*, as personal compassion prevails over legal, social and moral perfection, and mercy prevails over justice. From such a position, persons are judged to be more important than principles, relationships more important than rules and regulations, and the expression of personal care more important than the mere execution of one’s duty.¹⁵

¹⁴ The Pharisees depicted in the Gospels—who considered themselves to be upright or “righteous” (Mk. 7: 1-23; Mt. 15: 1-3)—are a good example of people assiduously living by such a consciousness.

¹⁵ The various conflicts over the interpretation of Sabbath laws between Jesus on the one hand and the Scribes and Pharisees on the other (Mk. 2: 1-12, 23-28; Mk. 3: 1-6) are a good example of conflict between one who operates from empathy (Jesus) and one who gives more importance to the adherence of contemporary social and moral codes (the religious leaders who opposed Jesus).

3.3. *Trans-PersonalandTrans-Community*

Focused Growth: Befriending the Other as Other

This interpersonally refined empathetic state of awareness is a threshold towards - and sets the conditions for - an even more evolved state, in which one is able to allow for personal and communitarian differences with one's own horizon of meaning and purpose. It is this level of awareness that may generally be referred to as "befriending the other," but more properly as "befriending the other *as other*." This form of awareness too may be broken down into at least three discrete types. An *altruistic* awareness is the most basic, in which one recognizes the value of "alterity" or "otherness." This entails an admittance that there are persons and communities who live by different values, and are possessed of a different vision and purpose in life, and that all of these have a unique status and value and ought not be reduced to one's own way of life. Based on this consciousness of alterity, contemporary currents of postmodern critique point towards many glaring instances of discrimination based either on a binary polarization (male-female, white-'coloured', clergy-laity) or a hierarchical system (class, caste). This heightened consciousness is able to recognize and affirm the mutual rights of other communities.

However, a mere admittance or recognition of "otherness" does not automatically entail that one has the inclination or the ability to genuinely empathize with people of other communities. This requires a more proactive *agapeistic* awareness - an extension of the empathetic attitude towards the other as other. Compassion and concern for those of other communities and the cultivation of companionship - etymologically, "breaking bread together"- with the other are constitutive elements of this state of awareness. One of the clearest examples of a person operating from such a consciousness is Mother Theresa, who cared for the lowly and the dispossessed from all religious, cultural and national communities. There are many non-governmental and non-profit organizations whose members also operate from such a consciousness, thus transcending the limited concern exhibited by governmental and corporate agencies - the former operating from national interests, and the latter largely from monetary interests.

Beyond even this benevolent disposition lies perhaps the highest state of awareness that humans may reach in terms of personal development. At this level of being, it is quite likely that the awareness of a self which is separate from any other reality breaks down. In this *mystic* state of awareness, one is suffused with an ecstatic experience that may be characteristic of a wide variety of ultimate values - based on one's fundamental spiritual orientation - such as love, beauty, goodness, wellbeing, existential truth and unity (harmony, interconnectedness). Numerous examples of great mystics from the different religious traditions abound: Plotinus, John of the Cross, Sankaracharya, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Aurobindo. However, there are numerous instances in the lives of ordinary human beings which may also feature flashes of this overcoming of duality between the self and the other, and a momentary experience of some form of transcendent reality, which in many cases may be indescribable or even unable to recall with accuracy.¹⁶

Beyond these examples of extraordinary and ordinary mystics, are numerous examples of persons who systematically moved beyond individual and community wellbeing, and embraced trans - community or universal wellbeing as their goal, e.g., Buddha, Socrates, Jesus, Gandhi, Mother Theresa. Many such people found themselves living at a heightened state of human consciousness. Unfortunately, some of these - and many others - had to pay with their lives for the novel and radical vision and values they propagated to their contemporaries.

4. The Tenuous Nature of the Different States of Growth

It is tempting to consider these states of consciousness in terms of linear and progressive *stages* of growth.¹⁷ Also, we often assign a

¹⁶ See Harvey Egan, "The Mysticism of Everyday Life," in *Formative Spirituality Bulletin* (Duquesne), 10/1 (1989), and James Carse, *Breakfast at the Victory: The Mysticism of Ordinary Experience* (NY: Harper One, 1995).

¹⁷ One of the main differences between these stages of consciousness and Lawrence Kohlberg's six moral stages of growth - which has been the original framework which I have worked upon to posit these ten states - is that

“character” to persons who seem to operate from a particular state of consciousness. However, regression to lower states of consciousness is always possible - and likewise, progression to higher states. Even if a person operates from a particular state of consciousness in a regular and sustained manner, it is quite possible that he or she goes through diverse experiences ranging from the phobic to the mystical during the course of a day. This will largely depend on extenuating circumstances and how one decides to respond to these circumstances. Thus, while it may appear to be natural that growth takes place in a linear manner - that is, moving from one state to the next in a steady progression - the extenuating conditions governing human life and corresponding personal responses to them introduce necessary nuance and ambivalence into an otherwise apparently progressive perception of human growth.

People living in urbanized, capitalistic governed societies may largely be driven to live their lives at a more individualistically focused level, while those who live in rural, traditional or indigenous (tribal) societies which value communal belonging and interconnectedness over individual achievement, will by default live at higher levels of consciousness on the normative scale provided. However, a more integral pathway towards a full human life seems to naturally include all these three types of befriending: befriending oneself, befriending others in one's community and befriending the 'other' beyond oneself and one's community. A person living at higher states of consciousness will not ideally negate or repress previous experiences associated with lower states. Instead, he or she needs to build upon the past by organically synthesizing or integrating past experiences at lower states into subsequent experiences at more refined and wholesome states of consciousness.

Kohlberg seemed to have a more rigid cognitive understanding of the nature of these stages, besides not allowing room for regression to take place. For other differences between Kohlberg's six stages and these ten states, see Keith D'Souza, "Levels of Existential Development," in *The Dynamics of Development: Negations and Negotiations*

Conclusion

Personal growth is an ongoing task and challenge, in order that higher ranges of the spectrum of growth proposed may gradually characterize the state of one's awareness. For this to happen, one needs to ensure that there are adequate external or circumstantial conditions for higher states of awareness to thrive. Besides fostering these situational conditions for growth, however, it is also necessary to discern how to respond to external stimuli - especially adverse circumstances - in an enlightened manner, so that higher levels of awareness may be experienced at greater frequency, intensity and duration.

The attainment of consciousness at more refined states is both a task and a gift, and one cannot be assured that such a state persists without conscious effort. There is thus need for regular discernment or some form of ongoing awareness exercise, to sustain a higher level of consciousness and wellbeing. Growing as a person is a lifelong personal project. But it is also a spiritual, moral and social obligation. Because the journey of growth from befriending oneself to befriending the other is not just an exercise in personal or interpersonal growth - it is also a spiritual, moral and social imperative.

Holistic Befriending of the Other in Buddhism

Noel Sheth

Buddhist befriending is holistic: it befriends human beings, even enemies, and nature too. In Buddhism one befriends others, in all circumstances and without discrimination, whether they are friends or enemies, offenders and prisoners, the poor and the needy. It also includes other religions and cultures as well as nature. We find several examples in the Buddhist texts, in history and in the contemporary world. This befriending is done with an altruistic spirit, with forbearance, loving friendship and compassion. As in all religions, however, there are exceptions in the texts, in history and in the modern world. Still, overall, Buddhism has been more peace-loving and non-violent than several other religions. Buddhist and Christian befriending do resemble each other, e.g., both are opposed to malice and both go to the extent of loving one's enemy. Although there are similarities, there are also differences between Buddhism and Christianity with regard to the presuppositions, the cultivation, motivation and expression of befriending. While divergent world-views result in such differences, Buddhists, Christians and others need to hearken to the call of peace and altruistic love, to heal a broken world and build bridges of friendship and harmony with other human beings and with nature. Dr. Noel Sheth S.J. is on the staff of St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Mumbai.

There are two forms of Buddhism, Hinayana and Mahayana. In Hinayana only one school is living, viz., Theravada, whose original texts are in the Pali language. In Mahayana there are many schools existing, and their original texts in India were in Sanskrit. Buddhist befriending is holistic: it befriends human beings, even enemies, and befriends nature too.

1. Befriending in the Buddhist Texts

A. Befriending Other Human Beings

a. Befriending Others in All Circumstances

In the Theravada scripture, the Buddha exhorts the disputatious monks of Kosambiya to live in mutual respect and harmony both in public and in private, asking them to be friendly in thought, word and deed, being united with one another in virtues as well as in their views.¹ A Theravada text declares that whoever bears enmity even to thieves who sever one's limbs, with a saw, does not carry out the teaching of the Buddha. Even in such a circumstance, one should not be harsh to the thieves or hate them, but rather one should be kind and compassionate and cultivate friendliness (*metta*) towards them as well as towards the whole world.² Mahayana texts exhort that one must forgive all types of offences (injury, insult, abuse, criticism), everywhere (in private and in public), at all times (past, present and future), in all circumstances (in sickness or health), in thought (not entertaining angry thoughts), word (not speaking harshly) and deed (not harming physically), without any exception (whether friend, enemy or indifferent person), and however wicked the offending person or however terrible the injury may be.³

In one of his previous lives as a Bodhisatta (in Sanskrit Bodhisattva),⁴ Gotama (a Pali form corresponding to the Sanskrit Gautama) Buddha

¹ *Kosambiyasutta*, in *Majjhimanikaya*, pt I, 48, p. 393ff. Unless otherwise stated, all references to the Buddhist Sanskrit texts cited by me are to the Darbhanga ed., published by the Mithila Institute, Bihar. However, references to the *Dhammapada-atthakatha* and the *Jataka-atthakatha* are from the Dhammagiri edition published by the Vipassana Research Institute, Igatpuri, Maharashtra.

² *Kakacupamasutta*, in *Majjhimanikaya*, pt I, 21.5.20, pp. 172-173.

³ See the texts cited in Har Dayal, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1932), pp. 209-210.

⁴ In Theravada, the term Bodhisatta (Pali form of the word) generally refers to Gotama Buddha in a previous life before he became enlightened. In Mahayana Bodhisattvas (Sanskrit form of the term) are special beings who delay their salvation for the sake of helping others, take on the sufferings of others,

was born as Kundalakumara, who was later known as Khantivadi [Sanskrit Ksantivadin], i.e., “One who preached the doctrine of forbearance”. Angry with Khantivadi, King Kalabu tested his forbearance, inflicting one agonizing torture after another. He first had him scourged all over his body, then had his hands and feet chopped off, and then his nose and ears cut off. Even though the king taunted him after every torment, Khantivadi never got angry, declaring himself to be a preacher and practitioner of forbearance. Finally, the king kicked him on his chest near the heart and walked off in a huff. The commander-in-chief requested Khantivadi to vent his wrath only on the king, but to spare the others and the kingdom. However, instead of taking revenge, Khantivadi uttered a blessing, “Long live the king!”⁵

We notice in such instances that the ideal is not even to feel anger or hatred even in the most trying circumstances. We could say that, strictly speaking, there is nothing to forgive, for there is no offence taken in the first place. The ideal seems to be a sort of stoic attitude of not being perturbed at all.

b. Befriending Others without Discrimination

I have elsewhere⁶ shown how the Buddha endeavoured to reinterpret the caste system in terms of virtue and wisdom. Biologically, the human race is a single species: there is no distinction between the castes.⁷

transfer their merits to them and give them grace: see ACPI [Association of Christian Philosophers of India] *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2010, s.v. “Bodhisattva”, by Noel Sheth, S.J., vol. I, pp. 183-187.

⁵*Khantivadijatakavannana*, in *Jataka-atthakatha*, 4.2.3, No. 313, vol. 72, pp. 34-37. A Sanskrit version is found in the *Ksantijataka* in the *Jatakamala*, 28, pp. 189ff. Unless otherwise stated, all references to the Buddhist Sanskrit texts are from the Bauddha-Samskrta-Granthaval? edition, published by the Mithila Institute of Post-graduate Studies and Research in Sanskrit Learning, Darbhanga, Bihar.

⁶Noel Sheth, “The Buddha’s Attitude to Caste”, *Negations* 4 (October-December, 1982): 23-26.

⁷*Assalayanassutta*, in *Majjhimanikaya*, pt II, 43, pp. 403-413; and *Vasethasutta*, in *Majjhimanikaya*, pt II, 48, pp. 462-468.

The *Brahmanavagga* of the *Dhammapada* defines a Brahmin as one who has banished sin (*bahitapapo ti brahmano*).⁸ The same *vagga* explains further that a person does not become a Brahmin through his family or birth, but by his virtuous life and deep knowledge. In the same vein, the *Vasalasutta* states that it is the wicked, ignorant and violent person who is an outcaste (*vasala*). It is not by birth (*jacca*) but by deeds (*kammuna*) that one becomes a Brahmin or an outcaste.⁹ Thus the Buddha redefines caste in terms of ethical categories.

The Buddha's monastic Order (*sangha*) was open to all castes. There was no discrimination based on birth, occupation, social status or ritual purity. Women, however, were admitted by him only later – and that too, very reluctantly.

It may be remarked that the princely Buddha shows a preference for the Ksatriyas, for he maintains that they are superior to Brahmins, if one were to take lineage into consideration. He points out that a Ksatriya who has fallen into the deepest degradation is superior to a Brahmin who commits similar offences.¹⁰ When the four castes are listed, the Ksatriyas are frequently mentioned before the Brahmins.¹¹ Is this a prejudice on the part of the Buddha, who was originally from the Ksatriya class, or of his disciples? Ultimately of course he does not put his trust in lineage. In the same *Ambatthasutta* where he makes the Ksatriya superior to the Brahmin, he makes it clear that it is the one who is perfect in wisdom and righteousness that is the best among deities and human beings.¹² In this context, it is unfortunate that the three *Nikayas*¹³ among the monks in Sri Lanka are mostly based on caste differences.¹⁴

⁸ *Dhammapada*, v. 388, in *Khuddakanikaya*, pt I, p. 54.

⁹ *Vasalasutta* of *Suttanipata*, 1.7, in *Khuddakanikaya*, pt I, pp. 287-290.

¹⁰ *Ambatthasutta*, in *Dighanikaya*, pt I, 3.6, pp. 84-86.

¹¹ On Ksatriya claims to superiority, see G. S. Ghurye, *Caste and Class in India* (Bombay: The Popular Book Depot, 1950), pp. 71-72.

¹² *Dighanikaya*, pt I, 3.6, p. 86.

¹³ These are monastic lineages or fraternities.

¹⁴ Anthony Fernando, "Contemporary Buddhism in Sri Lanka (Ceylon)" in Dumoulin and Maraldo, eds., *Buddhism in the Modern World* (New York: MacMillan and Co., 1976), p. 66.

By stressing the equality of all castes and reinterpreting the caste system in ethical terms, the Buddha brought new hope and the experience of human dignity to the many Buddhist converts from the scheduled castes who, in their quest for psychological liberation from the shackles of casteism,¹⁵ have followed Dr. Ambedkar¹⁶ into the Buddhist fold.

We may mention in passing that, although there is no discrimination with respect to caste, sexist and other prejudices do survive in the Buddhist Scriptures in keeping with their times. Monks and nuns are superior to the laity, particularly in Theravada. Women are inferior to men; in the Order nuns are subordinate to the monks: e.g., a nun even of a hundred years standing must first salute a monk even if he is just ordained; she should never rebuke or abuse a monk; monks can admonish nuns, but not vice versa.¹⁷ Still, it is worthy of note that the rights of the wife and of the employee (including wages, bonuses and leave) are emphasized.¹⁸

c. *Befriending Enemies*

In the Buddhist texts, one finds many reasons to motivate oneself to avoid resentment towards enemies. Buddhaghosa, a Theravada Buddhist, includes the following reasons in his *Visuddhimagga*: remembering the scriptural passages that exhort one to practise forbearance and avoid hatred, reflecting on the harmful effects of anger on oneself, developing compassion for one's enemies who will suffer in purgatories due to their succumbing to anger, recalling to mind the many examples of the Buddha, who in previous lives as a human adult or child and even as an animal did not entertain the slightest hatred

¹⁵ Adele M. Fiske, "Caste among the Buddhists", in Harjinder Singh, ed., *Caste among Non-Hindus in India* (New Delhi: National Publishing House, 1977), pp. 102-103.

¹⁶ See his "Caste in India", and "Annihilation of Caste", in Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 1 (Bombay: The Education Dept., Government of Maharashtra, 1979), pp. 5-96.

¹⁷ *Gotamisutta*, in *Anguttaranikaya*, pt III, 8.6.1, pp. 370-371.

¹⁸ *Singalasutta*, in *Dighanikaya*, pt III, 8.5.28 and 30, pp. 146-147.

towards his tormentors, reflecting that one's enemy may have been one's loving parents or brothers or sisters or sons or daughters in previous lives, realizing that the one with whom one is angry is not a substantial soul, but merely a series of momentary aggregates of various elements, and therefore one cannot make that person the target of one's anger.¹⁹

Similarly, Mahayana texts, too, try to motivate one to practise forgiveness. Firstly, one should follow the teaching and example of the Buddhas in forgiveness. The Buddhas will not forgive people unless they forgive others who offend them. Secondly, in reference to the person to be forgiven one may reflect in this manner: the present enemy may have been one's friend, relative, or teacher in a former birth. Since Mahayana Buddhism does not believe in a finite soul, strictly speaking, there is no perpetrator of injuries and insults, nor is any one injured or insulted.²⁰ All beings are evanescent and subject to pain and suffering, and so one should rather lighten their burden than be angry and unforgiving. The adversaries are conditioned by the results of their deeds (*karman*) in past lives, and are therefore not acting freely. Thirdly, one may also think with regard to oneself in the following vein: one is suffering insult and injury as a consequence of one's own evil deeds in previous existences; one's enemies are actually one's friends and beneficiaries for they preserve one from such worldly goods as wealth and fame, and give one the golden opportunity to practise forbearance, which leads to salvation. Fourthly, one should ponder over the ill effects of an angry and unforgiving attitude: it results in terrible punishments in various purgatories, and wipes out the merit one has gained through several lives. Hence, it is better to bear up with the comparatively negligible sufferings inflicted on one in this life than face terrible tortures in the future. Revenge always brings evil consequences on oneself.

¹⁹ *Visuddhimagga*, 9.15-38; see Nyanamoli, *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)*, 2nd ed. (Colombo: A. Semage, 1964), pp. 324-332.

²⁰ It is interesting to note the contrary case in the Hindu *Bhagavadgita* (2.19), where Krishna urges Arjuna to fight against the Kauravas since the soul – which constitutes the essence of a person and is inactive – is neither a slayer nor is slain.

Being at peace with others results in great happiness to oneself. Often one is unforgiving because of pride, which needs to be replaced by the spirit of humble service. Finally, mercy and love urge us to forgive others.²¹

On occasion, the Buddha himself brings about reconciliation. In the Introduction to the *Kunalajataka*, it is reported that when the Koliya and Sakyan tribes were about to engage in a bloody battle over the right to the waters of the river Rohini, the Buddha persuaded them to desist from fighting by making them realize that there was no point in killing warriors of priceless value for the sake of some water that had comparatively little worth.²² Not all, however, paid heed to the Buddha's mediations. He was unable to persuade the stubborn monk Tissa to ask forgiveness for not welcoming some visiting monks with respect and hospitality. Tissa was unforgiving because he was angry with those monks for having abused him for this fault of omission. In fact, in a previous life too he was not willing to ask pardon.²³

d. Befriending Offenders and Prisoners

Unlike several Hindu texts that, in addition to expiation and reformatory punishment, also prescribe retributive and deterrent punishment, Theravada texts recommend punishment only after all other means of settling a dispute have been tried out, such as discussion, appeal to reason, repentance, etc., and even then, the punishment to be meted out is more on the milder and lighter side.²⁴ Theravada texts do not advocate capital punishment. So also, Mahayana texts are against capital punishment and amputation, and caution that, when punishment is to be administered, it should be with compassion.²⁵ Justice must be restorative, not

²¹ See the texts cited in Dayal, *Bodhisattva Doctrine*, pp. 210-212.

²² *Kunalajatakavannana*, in *Jataka-atthakatha*, 5.21.4, No. 536, vol. 74, pp. 408-410.

²³ *Tissatheravattu*, in *Dhammapada-atthakatha*, 1.3, pt I, vol. 50, pp. 25-29; see Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends*, pt I, pp. 166-170.

²⁴ Unto Tahtinen, *Ahimsa: Nonviolence in Indian Tradition* (London: Rider and Co., 1976), pp. 102-103.

²⁵ *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. G. P. Malalasekera and others, s.v. "Ahimsa", by Hirakawa, vol. 1, p. 291.

retributive. It should also be clarified that, although justice in the near future is not always insisted upon, eventual justice will normally take place, for it is based on the law of *karman*; however, as in devotional Hinduism, divine beings in devotional Mahayana can forgive sins as well as wipe out, at least partially, the punishment due to sins.

e. Befriending People of Other Religions

The Buddha declares that he did not preach the Buddhist religion (Sanskrit *Dharma*) in separate portions: one pertaining to the Disciples' Vehicle, another to the Vehicle of the Pratyeka-buddhas²⁶ and a third for the Mahayana. Whoever makes such distinctions is confused and rejects the true *Dharma* by describing it as divided.²⁷ Here no distinction is made between various Buddhist traditions.

In reference to other religions, the Buddha assures Nigrodha that, in wanting to teach the Buddhist religion (Pali *Dhamma*), he does not wish to get disciples for himself by alienating people of other religions from their teachers, rules, ways of life and right doctrines or by confirming them in their wrong views; all he intends is to help them get rid of things that cause corruption, suffering and rebirth.²⁸ At another time, the Buddha tells Dhammika that the one who reviles sages of other traditions who are self-composed and free from passion obtains great demerit (*apunna*).²⁹ It should be noted, however, that in the very next verse he adds that the one who reviles the Buddha's disciple who is accomplished in views (*ditthi-sampanna*), attains even greater demerit.

²⁶ In Theravada (Pali *Pacceka-buddha*), they attain liberation by their own effort but do not teach others; in Mahayana (Sanskrit *Pratyeka-buddha*) they do not teach others in the normal way, but do so through thought-transference. However, both in Theravada as well as in Mahayana, they are inferior to Buddhas and, in Mahayana, where the ideal is to become a Bodhisattva, they are also inferior to Bodhisattvas who, unlike Pratyeka-Buddhas, delay their own salvation for the sake of helping others to attain salvation.

²⁷ *Sikhsasamuccaya*, 4.7, p. 56.

²⁸ *Dighanikaya*, pt III, 2.8.27, p. 44.

²⁹ *Dhammikasutta*, in *Anguttaranikaya*, pt III, 6.5.16, p.84.

B. Befriending Nature

Gotama Buddha died of blood dysentery after eating a dish called *sukara-maddava* (soft pork).³⁰ Scholars have different opinions as to whether this *sukara* was pork or a vegetarian dish made from such items as a sprout or a mushroom, etc. However, the earliest Pali commentaries identify it as pork.³¹ In the *Amagandhasutta* it is pointed out that destruction of life, cutting, binding, injustice, harshness, anger, envy, slander, injury, cruelty, disrespect, greed, hostility, etc. have the foul odour of rotting meat, but not so the eating of meat.³² When Buddhist monks went on their begging rounds, they were expected to accept whatever was put into their begging bowls. Early Buddhists were therefore not strict vegetarians.³³ Nevertheless, in time Theravadins became increasingly vegetarian. A monk had to avoid eating animals that were seen or heard by him, or suspected to have been deliberately killed for him.³⁴ Theravada Buddhists should not be butchers, hunters and fisher folk, and should avoid any job that entails cruelty such as being an executioner or jailer. If they take up such occupations, they are tormentors of others.³⁵ Buddhism also reacted against the sacrificial killing of animals.³⁶

Coming now to Mahayana, the eighth chapter of the *Saddharmalakavatasutra* is wholly dedicated to making people turn away from meat-eating. Although a good part of the chapter is in reference to Bodhisattvas, it is clearly meant for all the Buddha's disciples (*sisya*). In contrast to the earlier exceptions made by Theravada texts, this *sutra* categorically states that it is not true that meat is permissible when it is not killed or caused to be killed by oneself

³⁰ *Mahaparinibbanasutta*, in *Dighanikaya* pt II, 3.19.62, p. 98.

³¹ Edward J. Thomas, *The Life of the Buddha as Legend and History* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1927), p. 149, n. 3.

³² *Amagandhasutta*, in *Suttanipata*, 2.2.22-28, pp. 305-306.

³³ This does not mean that they were not sensitive to animal life.

³⁴ *Jivakasutta*, in *Majjhimanikaya*, pt II, 5.1.2, p. 39.

³⁵ *Kandarakasutta*, in *Majjhimanikaya*, pt II. 1.4.8, p. 8.

³⁶ *Brahmanadhammikasutta*, in *Suttanipata*, 2.7.88-93, pp. 313-314.

and not deliberately prepared for oneself by another. It further asserts that, even though exceptions have been made here and there in canonical texts (*desanapatha*, lit. directive or instructional texts), in this *sutra* flesh is unconditionally forbidden for all, in whatever form, manner or place.³⁷ In most of the chapter it puts forward many reasons for avoiding non-vegetarian food. For example, given the fact that transmigration has been going on for a very long time, there cannot be any animal or bird who at one time or another has not been one's own mother or father or some other relative. How then can one bring oneself to eat a living being that is of the same nature as oneself? Flesh, which is born of semen, blood, etc., pollutes one's purity; it brings demerit, leads to rebirth as a carnivorous animal and in various demonic forms; it prevents knowledge, and is an obstacle to salvation (*moksa*). Out of compassion we should refrain from consuming meat, for when an animal sees a meat-eater it is frightened for its life. Flesh has a foul smell even when burned, and spoils one's good name among noble (*arya*) people, whose food is vegetarian; meat-eating invites censure against Buddhism.³⁸ Looking upon all beings as our very own (child), we should refrain from devouring their flesh. Non-vegetarians suffer from disturbed sleep, terrible dreams and ill health. The consumption of meat successively results in pride, erroneous imagination, passion, delusion of the mind, and lack of liberation.

Buddhist texts are also against the unnecessary destruction of vegetative life. A monk should abstain from destroying the growth of seeds and vegetables.³⁹ The destruction of plant-life by monks is a

³⁷ *Mamsabhaksanaparivartah*, in *Saddharmalankavatarasutra*, 8, p. 103, lines 10-11, 24-26; see also vv. 12 and 19, p. 105. The reference to earlier canonical texts that did make exceptions to pure vegetarianism indicates that Buddhism did permit meat-eating in former times.

³⁸ The somewhat defensive attitude of the text in the face of actual criticism against Buddhists consuming meat seems to indicate that the text's pure vegetarianism is proposed as a reaction to this criticism: see Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, tr., *The Lankavatara Sutra* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1932; reprinted 1956), p. 211, n. 1.

³⁹ *Culahatthipadopamasutta*, in *Majjhimanikaya*, pt I, 27.2.8, p. 230.

pacittiya ("expiation")⁴⁰ type of offence, which requires confession.⁴¹ Monks were of course permitted to eat vegetables, to use twigs to brush their teeth or to use herbal medicines.⁴² The basic idea is to avoid unnecessary violence even to plant life and to develop sensitivity to the whole of nature. In fact, it is a *pacittiya* fault even to dig the earth or cause it to be dug:⁴³ this is in order to avoid doing violence to the living organisms and seeds in the earth.

2. Befriending in Buddhist History

A. Asoka and Honen Befriending Enemies

In the 13th Rock Edict, the Emperor Asoka publicly expresses his remorse and confesses how the carnage at Kalinga caused him great anguish. He also declares that he pardons, as far as it is possible, all those who have wronged him. He makes peace with the people living in the forests. He wishes all beings to be free from injury and to enjoy gentleness or joyousness.⁴⁴ He even took care to omit the 13th Edict from the texts carved on the rocks in Kalinga, lest even his words of repentance would serve as a spark to re-ignite adverse emotions in the Kalingas by reviving the memory of his fateful attack on their country.⁴⁵

The father of Honen, the leader of the Japanese Jodo-shu school, was fatally wounded by a gang of robbers who attacked their home. On his deathbed, his father exhorted his son never to take revenge but rather to pray for the salvation of his father as well as of the attackers.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Really speaking, there is no expiation required, but only confession: see I. B. Horner, trans. *The Book of the Discipline*, vol. 2, Sacred Books of the Buddhists vol.20 (London: Pali Text Society, 1957), p. 3, n. 4.

⁴¹ *Pacittiya*, no.11, pp. 54-56.

⁴² See Horner, tr., *The Book of the Discipline*, p. 229, n. 4.

⁴³ *Pacittiya*, no. 10, pp. 52-54.

⁴⁴ Radhagovinda Basak, ed., *Asokan Inscriptions* (Calcutta: Progressive Publishers, 1959), pp. 71-72.

⁴⁵ Romila Thapar, cited by Rajmohan Gandhi, *Revenge and Reconciliation: Understanding South Asian History* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1999), p. 52.

⁴⁶ Masaharu Anesaki, *History of Japanese Religion: With Special Reference to the Social and Moral Life of the Nation* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench,

B. Befriending Other Cultures

Thus Buddhism did not confine itself to one culture. Its openness, universal outlook and respect for pluralism enabled it to inculturate itself deeply in different cultures. It should be noted that in spite of the two main divisions of Buddhism acculturating themselves to different cultures, each still preserves a certain basic unity. The various Mahayana schools, which have incarnated themselves much more than Theravada, display a wide divergence in practices, rituals, meditational techniques, etc.; however, they differ but little in their philosophical or theological understanding of reality. In this way, each branch of Buddhism is able to maintain a unique unity in diversity.

C. Befriending Nature

In his 5th Pillar Edict King Asoka exempted several animals from slaughter, e.g., parrots, geese, swans, bats, boneless fish, etc., and certain animals when they were pregnant. He also prohibited the killing of fish and certain animals on particular auspicious days.⁴⁷ In his 1st Rock Edict he forbade the sacrifice of all animals in his palace. Formerly very many living beings were killed daily for his table; but he decreed that only three would be slain: two peacocks and one deer, and the latter would not be killed invariably. In fact, he said, even these would not be slaughtered in the future.⁴⁸

In Theravada there developed the practice of setting up sanctuaries for birds and animals as well as tanks for fish, where they could move about freely without being hunted or caught. This was called *abhaya-dana* (the gift of fearlessness).⁴⁹

Similar to the case of Theravada, the custom, and even ceremony, of freeing living creatures arose in Mahayana too. It consisted in purchasing birds, animals and fish that had been captured, and setting

1930; reprint ed., Rutland, Vermont and Tokyo, Japan: Charles E. Tuttle, 1963), pp. 171-172.

⁴⁷ Basak, *Asokan Inscriptions*, p. 103.

⁴⁸ Basak, *Asokan Inscriptions*, p. 4.

⁴⁹ *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. G. P. Malalasekera and others, s.v. "*Abhaya-dana*," by Shuyu Kanaoka, vol. 1, pp. 20-21.

them free in their own habitats. In China and Japan, too, different kings prohibited the eating of meat and advocated non-violence towards animals, birds and fish.⁵⁰ It should be noted, however, that some Mahayana schools are non-vegetarian, while Theravada is vegetarian.

3. Contemporary Examples of Befriending

A. Befriending Other Human Beings

I shall first give some instances of modern Theravada Buddhists and then move on to present-day Mahayana Buddhists.

a. Ariyaratne of Sri Lanka

Dr. Ahangamage Tudor Ariyaratne of Sri Lanka started his Sarvodaya (Uplift or Awakening of All) Sramadana (Donation of Labour) Movement in Sri Lanka between 1956 and 1958,⁵¹ and nurtured it for many years. Basing himself on traditional Theravada principles and also reinterpreting some of them to give them a social thrust, he set up volunteer work camps for social upliftment. Ariyaratne's Sarvodaya catered to ten fundamental needs of society: a pure and attractive environment, sufficient supply of pure water, basic requirements of clothing, an adequate diet, simple residential facilities, basic health services, communication infrastructure, fuel and other energy needs, a comprehensive education for daily living, and cultural and spiritual development.⁵² In every village Sarvodaya tried to set up six groups: pre-school toddlers, schoolchildren, mothers, youth, farmers, and the elderly. Each of these groups is conscientized and helped to participate, in varying degrees, in a holistic and all-round development of the village.⁵³

Although Ariyaratne is Sinhalese, he extended his hand of friendship and collaboration to the Tamil Hindus in Sri Lanka. His Sarvodaya

⁵⁰*Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Malalasekera, and others, s.v. "Ahimsa", by Akira Hirakawa, vol. 1, pp. 291-292.

⁵¹A.T. Ariyaratne, *Collected Works*, ed. by Nandasena Ratnapala (vols. 1-3, 6-7), B. A. Tennyson Perera (vol. 4) and Jehan Perera (vol. 5), 2nd ed., 7 vols. (Ratmalana, Sri Lanka: Sarvodaya Vishva Lekha, 1999), vol. 1, p. 43.

⁵²Ariyaratne, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, pp. 115-116.

⁵³Ariyaratne, *Collected Works*, vol. 4, pp. 43-49.

played an important role as peace builder in the severe ethnic conflicts of Sri Lanka. It analysed the causes of the conflicts, worked out comprehensive programmes to resolve the problems in a humane manner, encouraged Sinhalese and Tamilians to work together as volunteers in each other's villages, organized peace meditations, peace camps, peace pilgrimages and marches, and peace meetings and conferences; initiated ways and means for the return and rehabilitation of refugees; and, for both the militants and the armed forces, to lay down their arms and return to civilian life, through techniques of inner transformation.⁵⁴ Although Sarvodaya was a Buddhist movement, it was open to others: Tamilians (many of whom were Hindus) too played important leadership roles in Sarvodaya peace initiatives. Tamilians who collaborated with Sarvodaya looked upon it not so much as a Sinhalese Buddhist organization, but a Sri Lankan association. In 1994 Ariyaratne met leaders of the LTTE, in an attempt to bring about reconciliation and peace.⁵⁵

b. Uttarananda of Sri Lanka

The Sri Lankan monk H. Uttarananda, who was a member of the now defunct Humanist Bhikkhus'⁵⁶ Association (*Manava-hitavadi Bhikkhu Sangamaya*), proposed a Buddhist-Humanist view of the national ethnic problem in Sri Lanka. Following the typical Buddhist "middle path", he wanted to avoid the two extremes of a Sinhala Buddhist State and a free Eelam State. He acknowledged the inhuman atrocities perpetrated on Tamils in 1983 and thereafter by racist fanatics and governments, and was able to sympathetically understand the exasperated violent reactions of Tamils whose pent up rage boiled over due to the

⁵⁴ Ariyaratne, *Collected Works*, vol. 4, pp. 94-100, 103-104.

⁵⁵ George D. Bond, "A. T. Ariyaratne and the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in Sri Lanka", in *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, ed. by Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), pp. 136-137.

⁵⁶ *Bhikkhu* literally means a mendicant and refers to a Buddhist monk: the initial practice of begging for food is now generally defunct, except in a couple of countries like Thailand, Myanmar and Cambodia.

prolonged racist attitudes of successive governments. He called for reconciliation and strengthening of racial unity and peace.⁵⁷

c. The Four Mahanayakes or Patriarchs of Sri Lanka

In a Press Conference in Tokyo on 3rd June 2002, the four Mahanayakes or “Patriarchs” of the Theravada Buddhist Order of Sri Lanka publicly released a Press Statement, which declared that the Order was for peace and development in Sri Lanka and solicited the support of the Japanese people in the peace process and in confidence-building measures which would benefit all three communities affected by the war, viz., the Sinhalese, the Tamils and the Muslims.⁵⁸ The Sri Lankan newspaper *The Island* reported that the Mahanayake of Asgiriya conferred his blessings on both the UNP Government of Ranil Wickremesinghe as well as the LTTE in their efforts to restore peace through peace talks held in Thailand.⁵⁹

d. Sulak Sivaraksa of Thailand

Sulak Sivaraksa of Thailand is, on the one hand, rooted in the Buddhist Scripture. On the other hand, he frequently reinterprets traditional texts and doctrines to give them an explicit social and developmental orientation.

Sivaraksa founded a number of social welfare organizations or voluntary Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), in which people work with dedication for the uplift of the poor, both in the villages and the cities. Inspired by spiritual principles, they reach out to those in need – exploited men, women and children – and help them, through non-violent means, to regain their human dignity and stand on their own feet. They also pay attention to ecology and the environment: they work for integral and sustainable development.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ H. Uttarananda, “Sihala Buddhist Monks and the Rights of the Tamils”, *Dialogue* n.s. 18:1-3 (January-December 1991): 6-9, 12-13.

⁵⁸ From the text of the Press Release, sent to me by the Japanese Committee of the World Conference on Religion and Peace.

⁵⁹ *The Island*, 5th November 2002, p. 1.

⁶⁰ Donald K. Swearer, “Sulak Sivaraksa’s Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society”, in *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, ed. by Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), pp. 200-208.

What is particularly notable is that Sivaraksa also engages in interreligious dialogue and cooperative interreligious social action for development. He started the Thai Interreligious Commission for Development. He also participated in the World Conference on Religion and Peace in Melbourne. He collaborated with a number of Catholic and Protestant development organizations in different parts of the world. He mentions several dialogue meetings with Christians, where all were equal, challenging one another in friendship, and working together for social uplift. Over many years, he was able to build bonds of friendship with individual Buddhists of other traditions, as well as with Christians, Jews, Muslims and Hindus in different parts of the world.⁶¹

e. The Late Maha Ghosananda of Thailand

In war-torn Cambodia, the late Maha Ghosananda of Thailand, five-time Nobel Peace Prize nominee, led nine *Dhammayietras* [Khmer or Cambodian for the Sanskrit *Dharmayatra*s] or Pilgrimages of Truth to promote peace between rival Cambodian groups. Often opponents met and walked together in the spirit of reconciliation. In his first *Dhammayietra*, he preached repeatedly, “The suffering of Cambodia has been deep. From this suffering comes Great Compassion. Great Compassion makes a peaceful heart. A peaceful heart makes a peaceful person. A peaceful person makes a peaceful family. A peaceful family makes a peaceful community. A peaceful community makes a peaceful nation. A peaceful nation makes a peaceful world”.⁶² When, returning from his monastery in Thailand, he paid his first visit to the Sakeo Cambodian refugee camp, he distributed copies of the *Mettasutta*, a Buddhist Theravada scriptural text on loving kindness or friendship, and exhorted the refugees to forgive their persecutors.⁶³ A leader of

⁶¹ Sulak Sivaraksa, *Loyalty Demands Dissent: Autobiography of an Engaged Buddhist*, with a Foreword by the Dalai Lama (Berkeley, California: Parallax Press, 1998), pp. 155-164.

⁶² “Letter from Cambodia” [a newsletter], March 2002, p. 1.

⁶³ “Editors’ Introduction”, in Maha Ghosananda, *Step by Step: Meditations on Wisdom and Compassion*, ed. by Jane Sharada Mahoney and Philip Edmonds, with a Foreword by Dith Pran and a Preface by Jack Kornfield (Berkeley, California: Parallax Press, 1992), pp. 17-18.

the Khmer Rouge⁶⁴ requested Maha Ghosananda to visit Thailand and build a Buddhist temple on the border of Cambodia, and the latter readily agreed. Many were scandalized that he was helping an "enemy". However, he pointed out that love did not discriminate between good or bad; in fact, it was those who were deviants who needed loving kindness all the more because, often enough, virtue vanished from them because they did not experience the warmth of empathy from others. Quoting Mahatma Gandhi, he said that reconciliation consisted in destroying enmity, not enemies; loving kindness removed ignorance from adversaries as well as from us: we all needed to be freed.⁶⁵

f. Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar

Nobel Laureate, Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar was at a public rally at the Shwedagon Pagoda in 1998. She appealed to the people to let bygones be bygones, to manifest their innate ability to forgive, not to abandon their traditional love for the armed forces and to resort to peaceful means of walking hand in hand with the authorities to build a united Burma.⁶⁶ When she was freed in 1995, after six years of house arrest by the military, and that, too, in spite of a landslide victory of her party, she expressed appreciation for the conciliatory tenor of the announcement of release by her captors, and highlighted the need for dialogue rather than confrontation for the restoration of peace. She declared that she did not harbour any bitterness against anyone for the treatment she received during those six long years.⁶⁷

g. The Dalai Lama of Tibet

Let me now turn to Mahayana examples. Relying on Mahayana principles, the Dalai Lama, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize,

⁶⁴ The name of the communist group in Cambodia that carried out a massive genocide under the leadership of Pol Pot.

⁶⁵ Maha Ghosananda, *Step by Step*, pp. 62, 68-69.

⁶⁶ Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writings*, ed. with an Introduction by Michael Aris, with a Foreword to the first ed. by Vaclav Havel and a Foreword to the second ed. by Desmond Tutu, 2nd rev. ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1995), pp. 195-196.

⁶⁷ Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*, pp. 360-361.

has been advocating social responsibility and concern for nature. He has always embraced the policy of peaceful resistance to the Chinese, who occupied Tibet in 1950. He refers to the Chinese as his brothers and sisters and is motivated by tolerance, compassion and love. While wanting autonomy, he admits the fact that Tibet would continue to be linked with China.⁶⁸ In his Nobel Peace Prize Lecture, in speaking of the atrocities committed by the Chinese against Tibetans and their country and culture, he said that he did not speak with a heart filled with hatred or anger against the Chinese for, he added, they too were human beings striving for happiness and were entitled to compassion.

Elsewhere he also points out that enemies are valuable because they help us to advance in spiritual qualities such as forbearance and mental fortitude. He admits that, had he stayed in Lhasa, he might have been isolated and conservative. Hence, he is indebted to the Chinese since his exile helped broaden his perspectives. He felt very sad that Tibetans were infuriated against the Chinese and took part in burning Chinese vehicles.⁶⁹ His purpose in narrating the trials and tribulations of the Tibetan people was not out of vindictiveness or hostility towards the Chinese, but in order to inform the public. He also felt that many well-meaning Chinese were simply not aware of what was going on in Tibet.⁷⁰

The Dalai Lama admits, however, that when people exploit the sincerity of a person, it may be necessary to retort. However, although on the surface level an apt reaction is resorted to, there should be an underlying spirit of forbearance, compassion and tolerance, without bearing any ill feelings.⁷¹ Our real enemies are not outside us but inside

⁶⁸ Gandhi, *Revenge and Reconciliation*, p. 400.

⁶⁹ Dalai Lama, *The Dalai Lama: A Policy of Kindness: An Anthology of Writings by and about the Dalai Lama*, comp. and ed. by Sidney Piburn, with a Foreword by Claiborne Pell, Ithaca (NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1990), pp. 16, 105-106, 133.

⁷⁰ Dalai Lama, *Freedom in Exile: The Autobiography of the Dalai Lama* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1990; New Delhi: Rupa Paperback, 1991; 12th impression, 1994), p. 261.

⁷¹ Dalai Lama, *H. H. the Dalai Lama: The Bodhgaya Interviews*, ed. by Jose Ignacio Cabezon (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications, 1988), p. 32.

us, e.g., arrogance, wrath and envy, and we have to wage a war against these internal foes.⁷² World peace cannot be achieved without realizing that we are all sisters and brothers, and without cultivating kindness and compassion. However, this is not possible without inner transformation.⁷³

h. Thich Nhat Hahn of Vietnam

The Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh did not bear any hatred towards the Catholic Diem regime that persecuted him, nor to the Viet Cong or the U.S. soldiers who attacked Vietnam. He could find excuses for the atrocities perpetrated by U.S. soldiers in Vietnam, attributing these to their hard life in the swamps and jungles infested by mosquitoes and other insects, and to their being in constant danger of death. Although initially angry, he did not blame a sea-pirate who had raped a twelve-year old girl, thinking that if he had had the same historical, economic and educational background as that pirate he would probably have behaved in the same way. This attitude of Thich Nhat Hanh is based on the Buddhist doctrine of Dependent or Conditioned Co-production (*pratitya-samutpada*; Pali *patticca-saumuppada*), according to which no being or event arises without a conditioning factor: this (resulting) being or event is because that (preceding) being or event is; this (resulting) being or event is not because that (preceding) being or event is not.⁷⁴ It thus helps the Buddhist to pay attention to attenuating circumstances, and hence be more understanding and forgiving.

B. Befriending Nature

A number of Theravada monks in Thailand are giving leadership in befriending nature. Phrakhrū Manas Natheepitak, the abbot of Wat Bodharma, is said to be the first who came up with the novel idea of a ceremony that he called Tree Ordination, in which trees are wrapped in the saffron robes of Theravada monks. Many other monks follow this

⁷² Dalai Lama, *A Policy of Kindness*, p. 95.

⁷³ Dalai Lama, *Bodhgaya Interviews*, p. 47.

⁷⁴ Donald Nichols, "A Buddhist Contribution to Peace Spirituality", *Dialogue* n.s. 12:1-3 (January-December 1985): 2-3.

practice. When people see the saffron robes wrapped around the trees, they refrain from felling the trees. Similarly, another monk, Phrakhrut Pitak Nanthakun, in addition to a more elaborate Tree Ordination ceremony, also instituted a ritual for sanctifying the river Nan, an important river in Thailand. This ceremony is modelled on a traditional rite for lengthening the life span of human beings and domestic animals. He, and other monks after him, have conducted this ceremony on different occasions and have reserved certain parts of the river as safe havens for fish so that fish can multiply without human interference.⁷⁵

The Mahayana Buddhist country of Bhutan has a law that 60% of its land would be covered forever with forests. The King and Queen of Bhutan announced the birth of their first child on 5th February 2016. On 6th March 2016 the entire nation celebrated the prince's birth by planting 108000 saplings.⁷⁶ In June 2015, a team of 100 volunteers planted 49672 saplings in one hour, setting a Guinness record.⁷⁷

4. Befriending Others with Friendship and Compassion

Buddhists approach all forms of befriending, of humans as well as nature, in the spirit of friendship (Pali *metta*; Sanskrit *maitri*) and compassion (*karuna*). They are two of the four Buddhist virtues called *Brahma-viharas* (Sublime States or Abidings); the third *Brahma-vihara* is joy (*mudita*) and the fourth is equanimity (Pali *upekkha*; Sanskrit *upeksa*). While Theravada gives more importance to friendship, Mahayana emphasizes compassion more. All the four Sublime States are to be cultivated or developed through meditation.

In Theravada friendship essentially consists in the wish that all beings may be happy. Just as a mother would protect her only child at the risk

⁷⁵ Pipob Udomittipong, "Thailand's Ecology Monks", in *Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism*, ed. by Stephanie Kaza and Kenneth Kraft (Boston: Shambhala, 2000), pp. 193-194, 196-197.

⁷⁶ 108 is a sacred number in some Indian religions, including Buddhism.

⁷⁷ "Bhutan Celebrates Newborn Prince by Planting 108,000 Trees", report filed on 11th March 2016 by Vishal Arora in *The Diplomat* [Asia-Pacific online newspaper]: <http://thediplomat.com/2016/03/bhutan-celebrates-newborn-prince-by-planting-108000-trees/>, accessed on 22nd March 2016.

of her own life, even so one should cultivate unlimited love towards all beings.⁷⁸ In Mahayana friendship is a love that consists in the hope, prayer, keen desire for, and joy at, the happiness of others, without passion and the seeking of reward. It is of three kinds depending on whether it is directed towards living beings, phenomena (*dharma*) or no particular object.⁷⁹ Hence, both in Theravada as well as in Mahayana, friendship is altruistic love, and therefore *metta* or *maitri* is also translated as loving kindness.

Compassion includes all altruistic aspects of love. Bodhisattvas feel compassion for living beings like a father for his dear and only son.⁸⁰ The wise love all beings more than themselves, or their spouses, children, friends and relatives.⁸¹ Tormented by the sufferings of others, the compassionate ones do not look for their own happiness.⁸² Bodhisattvas desire enlightenment first for all beings and not for themselves.⁸³ In some passages, we notice that the Bodhisattvas act for the benefit of others (*para*) as well as themselves (*atman*).⁸⁴ However, in some other passages, we find that the texts speak only of the good of others, and not love for oneself,⁸⁵ thus emphasizing altruism much more.

5. Comparison With Christian Befriending

Buddhist and Christian befriending do resemble each other, e.g., both are opposed to malice and both go to the extent of loving one's enemy. However, there are many important differences, springing from their different world-views. Christians forgive others because otherwise

⁷⁸ *Suttanipata*, 1.8, v. 149, in *Khuddakanikaya*, pt I, pp. 290-291. This simile occurs in Mahayana texts too: e.g., the love (*prema*) of all beings as if they were one's only child (*Saddharmalankavatasutra*, 8, p. 100, line 6).

⁷⁹ *Siksamuccaya*, 12.20, p. 117, lines 9-13.

⁸⁰ *Saddharmapundarikasutra*, 5.44, p. 92, line 24.

⁸¹ *Mahayanasutralankara*, 19, v. 5, p. 154.

⁸² *Jatakamala*, 8, p. 43, line 1.

⁸³ *Siksamuccaya*, 7.14, p. 81, lines 4-5.

⁸⁴ *Mahayanasutralankara*, 16, p. 103, line 8.

⁸⁵ *Mahayanasutralankara*, 3, v. 12; *Bodhicaryavatara*, with the *Panjika* Commentary of Prajnakaramati, 8. v. 173, p. 165.

God will not forgive them.⁸⁶ But Theravada Buddhism does not admit any Supreme Being; hence the motivation is not the same. In Theravada, charity begins at home: one loves or practises friendliness first towards oneself; only then can one extend friendliness towards others.

In Christianity, the person befriended has intrinsic worth: the person is a child of God and has an immortal soul. In Theravada, on the other hand, the one who is befriended is neither created by a God nor has a soul: each individual is just a series of momentary aggregates, subject to the law of *kamma* [Sanskrit *karman*] (results of past deeds), and therefore does not have intrinsic worth, but should still be befriended. In Mahayana the human being has even less worth, for the individual does not exist even for one moment; only the Adi (First) Buddha, one of the technical terms for the Supreme and Only Being, exists. Yet, paradoxically, the ideal is to unilaterally befriend others who do not really exist even for a moment, except on the level of ignorance and from the practical point of view. In a sense, according to the doctrine of dependent co-production, dependence exists – which, in modern times, is further interpreted even as interdependence or a sort of interrelatedness – but individuals do not exist. Moreover, the interrelatedness in the Mahayana world-view is on the ontological level; ultimately there is absolute identity. As a result, while in Christianity one concentrates on overcoming differences between alienated people, in Mahayana one transcends these differences. Hence in Mahayana one can more easily identify oneself even with the oppressor.

While the cultivation and expression of Christian friendship is, in some measure, spontaneous, personal, and generally emotional, Theravada befriending, even if it comes naturally in the case of those who have attained perfection in it, is developed through a systematic, calculated method and expressed in a more impersonal, detached and emotionally more sedate manner.

Christian befriending is based on the inter-personal, communitarian world-view. In Theravada on the other hand, one can only do good or harm to oneself, for each one is reaping the fruits of one's own past

⁸⁶ See the Gospel according to Matthew, 6.12; 18.21-35.

deeds (Pali *kamma* or Sanskrit *karman*). One can help another only indirectly by one's example, by trying not to provoke resentment and anger in others and by the tranquil, detached vibrations of friendship (*metta*) sent out in different directions. Disagreeing with an acrobat, his apprentice pointed out that they would perform their act successfully not by watching out for each other but by each one watching out for himself.⁸⁷

In Christianity, it is often said that God will not forgive us unless we forgive others. In Mahayana, too, the Buddhas will not forgive people unless they forgive others. However, it should be noted that even here there are differences. For example, it is not the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who are the highest, but it is the Adi Buddha that is the Supreme Being. The dealings of the Mahayana Buddhists, however, are with the former.

The Buddhist doctrine of reincarnation motivates one to forgive and be reconciled, but Christianity does not believe in rebirth. On the other hand, for Christianity the person has intrinsic worth, but this is not the case with Buddhism. Hence the motivation for practising forgiveness and reconciliation is also different in the two traditions.

Unlike Christian befriending, Buddhist befriending is more universal, since it is extended also to nature and not just to human beings. However, possibly due to influence from Buddhism and other Eastern religions, and with a growing awareness of the environment in the West, modern Christianity is moving in the direction of befriending nature too and even making restitution by efforts to heal the earth and by recognizing the rights of animals and plants.

One of the practical differences between Christianity and Buddhism is that Buddhism prescribes meditational techniques to help one develop a befriending disposition: merely making a good resolution is not enough. Christianity, on the other hand, only exhorts people to befriend, forgive and be reconciled, but there are no methods or techniques that enable people to become more befriending and forgiving and more reconciled.

⁸⁷ *Sedakasutta*, in *Samyuttanikaya*, 47.19, pt 5, pp. 144-145.

Thus, we see that, while there are similarities in befriending between Christianity and Buddhism, there are many distinctions arising from the divergent world-views not only of Christianity but also of Theravada and Mahayana. These differences are found not only with regard to the presuppositions, but also in reference to the motivation as well as the expression of befriending.

While granting that divergent world-views result in differences with regard to the nature, motivation and expression of befriending, Buddhists, Christians and others need to hearken to the call of peace and altruistic love, to heal a broken world and build bridges of friendship and harmony.

Befriending the Other: Vatican II and the New Orientations

Kurien Kunnumpuram

The Council of Trent had succeeded in stemming the tide of the Reformation that threatened to destroy Catholicism , but it also had isolated the Church from other Christian Churches. The French Revolution and Vatican I only aggravated the situation. The Council of Vatican II recovered the integral Christian tradition and established cordial relations with the other Christian Churches, the diverse religions and cultures of humanity and the modern world. From the beginning of Christianity divisions began to take place in the Church. The reasons for division in the Church were many and varied. The way the Catholic Church reacted to the members of these Churches were also alien to the spirit of Jesus Christ. All this changed with Vatican II. For centuries most Christians believed that Christianity was the only true religion. It is in Vatican II that the world Religions were recognized and their positive values were appreciated. Right from the beginning the Church's attitude to the world was ambiguous. The Vatican II manifested eagerness to dialogue with the modern world. It is upto the Catholic faithful now to imbibe the spirit of this great Council and establish cordial relations with non-Catholic Christians, the followers of other faiths and the modern world. Dr.Kurien Kunnumpuram S.J. is Professor Emeritus of JDV, Pune and at present he resides at Christ Hall, Kozhikode, Kerala

In this paper I shall contend that Vatican II has brought about radical changes in the Church's attitude to other Christian Churches, other religions and the modern world. These changes can be clearly seen if we keep in mind the totally different attitude which prevailed in the Church before the Council.

The situation of the Church during the last four hundred years (before Vatican II) was largely due to the impact of the Council of Trent. After

pointing out that this Council had succeeded in stemming the tide of the Reformation that threatened to destroy Catholicism and in starting a process of Church renewal, Giuseppe Alberigo observes:

But the price paid for this successful orientation cannot be overlooked; it can be summed up as a drastic isolation of Roman Christianity, now cut off and insulated from any interaction with the other Christian traditions of East and West, condemned to an attitude of defensiveness toward the modern world and, finally, surrounded by a *cordon sanitaire* to prevent contamination from alien cultures. Never in the history of Christianity had the *massa damnata* been made to include so much and so many; never had Christianity so extended and exacerbated its own estrangement from the fortunes of the human race.¹

The Council of Trent had an enormous impact on the Church for about four centuries. During this period the Church's isolation from the other Christian Churches grew. The struggle with the Protestant Reformation and the opposition to modern culture led to the development of "the 'closed' ecclesiology of the post-tridentine period in which the Church is a fortified castle, jealous of its purity and bristling with condemnations".² There was a strong resistance to all attempts break out of this fortress mentality and open up lines of communication with various cultures or to build bridges between the Church and the common human condition. The French Revolution and Vatican I only aggravated the situation. "Ecclesiocentrism thus reached levels that were new in relation to the entire Christian tradition."³

Looking back on the Council and carefully examining its documents one can clearly see that its basic thrust was the Church's recovery of the integral Christian tradition and the establishment of cordial relations with the other Christian Churches, the diverse religions and cultures of humanity and the modern world.

¹ G. Alberigo "The Christian Situation after Vatican II" in G. Alberigo and others (eds.) *The Reception of Vatican II*, Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1987, pp. 13-14.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.* p. 15

1. Befriending the Other Churches

1.1 From the beginning of Christianity divisions began to take place in the Church. These divisions led to the emergence of different Churches. By the middle of the 5th century all the churches other than the Greco-Roman Church were shut out of the Catholic Church. In the 11th century the Greek Church got separated from the Roman Church. In the 16th century the Roman Church itself was split. As a result of the Reformation several Churches came into existence – Lutheran Churches, Reformed Churches of Calvin, Zwingli and so on.

The reasons for division in the Church were many and varied. First of all, there were theological reasons. Sometimes doctrinal differences paved the way for the emergence of new churches. Disciplinary matters too caused division. But there is reason to believe that social and cultural factors also caused division in the Church. This was quite evident in the separation between the Greek Church and the Roman Church. Diversity of culture may have played a role in Luther's revolt against Rome – the Germanic culture against the Latin culture. As Christopher Dawson has observed: "Most of the great schisms and heresies in the history of the Christian church have their roots in social and national antipathies, and if this had been clearly recognized by the theologians the history of Christianity would have been a very different one".⁴ Joseph Neuner calls attention to another factor: "Luther's revolt is not primarily a theological challenge of traditional doctrines but a revolution against the domination of the Christian people through the clergy in a spirit totally alien to Jesus Christ"⁵

The way the Catholic Church reacted to the members of these Churches were also alien to the spirit of Jesus Christ. They were condemned quite harshly.⁶ In the Church there developed a feeling of

⁴ C. Dawson, *Dynamics of World History*, Wilmington: ISI books, 2002, p. 32.

⁵ J Neuner, "Exploring Global Dimensions of Jesuit Priestly Apostolate", in *Ignis Studies* 2 (1983) p. 13.

⁶ Speaking of the members of the other churches the authorities of the Catholic Church use expressions like "perverse opinions and errors", "extraordinary boldness", "arrogant claim" etc. See Neuner – J. Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, Bangalore, TPI, 2008, n. 816.

animosity towards the members of these Churches. They were anathema to the authorities of the Catholic Church.

1.2 All this changed with Vatican II. The Council sought to befriend non-Catholic Christians and their churches. It admitted that the divisions in the Church were caused both by the Catholics as well as non-Catholic Christians and hence “both sides were to blame”.⁷ In unmistakable terms Vatican II declared:

However one cannot impute the sin of separation to those who at present are born into these Communities and are instilled therein with Christ’s faith. The Catholic Church accepts them with respect and affection as brothers and sisters. For men and women who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are brought into a certain, though imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church. Undoubtedly the differences that exist in varying degrees between them and the Catholic Church – whether in doctrine and sometimes in discipline, or concerning the structure of the Church – do indeed create many and sometimes serious obstacles to full ecclesiastical communion. These the ecumenical movement is striving to overcome. Nevertheless, all those justified by faith through baptism are incorporated into Christ. They therefore have a right to be honoured by the title of Christian and are properly regarded as brothers and sisters in the Lord by the sons and daughters of the Catholic Church.⁸

In this text two statements are quite significant: (1) The Catholic Church accepts the members of these Churches with respect and affection; (2) They are properly regarded as brothers and sisters by the children of the Catholic Church.

This was the first step in the process of befriending non-Catholic Christians. The second step was to recognize the non-Catholic Christian communities as Churches. In an earlier draft of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church there was a statement which totally identified the Church of Christ with the Roman Catholic Church. “The Church

⁷ Vatican II, Decree on Ecumenism, n. 3.

⁸ *Ibid.*

of Christ *is* the Roman Catholic Church".⁹ This was based on the teaching of Pope Pius XII that the Church of Christ, the Roman Catholic Church and the Mystical Body of Christ are one and the same thing.¹⁰ The Council changed this statement to: "The Church of Christ *subsists* in the Roman Catholic."¹¹ It then observed that "many elements of sanctification and of truth can be found outside of her visible structure".¹² Whatever be the exact meaning of this changed formulation, it does imply that the Catholic Church does not exhaust the ecclesial possibilities of the Church of Christ. These ecclesial possibilities are realized in the other Churches. Hence the Council calls them Christian Churches.¹³

These Christian Churches have many elements in common with the Catholic Church: Sacred Scripture, faith in the Triune God and Jesus Christ the Saviour. They celebrate baptism and some of the other sacraments. Many of them have the episcopate and venerate the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Council took a third step when it declared that these Churches have significance in the mystery of salvation. The Spirit of Christ uses them as means of salvation for their members.¹⁴

In its effort to befriend the other Churches, the Council took two more steps. While speaking about dialogue within and without the Church, Vatican II states: "Our hearts embrace also those brothers and communities not yet living with us in full communion."¹⁵ The Council also expresses its desire to collaborate with the members of the other Churches:

Cooperation among all Christians vividly expresses that bond which already unites them, and it sets in clearer relief the features of Christ the Servant. Such cooperation, which has already begun in many countries, should be ever increasingly developed, particularly in regions where a social and technical evolution is taking place. It

⁹ Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, n. 8.

¹⁰ See Neuner-Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, nos. 847, 858.

¹¹ Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, n. 8.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, n.15; Decree on Ecumenism, n. 3

¹⁴ Decree on Ecumenism, n. 3.

¹⁵ Vatican II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, n. 92.

should contribute to a just appreciation of the dignity of the human person, the promotion of the blessings of peace, the application of gospel principles to social life, and the advancement of the arts and sciences in a Christian spirit.¹⁶

Such collaboration is to be extended to the fight against social evils like poverty and illiteracy. The Council goes on to add: "Through such cooperation, all believers in Christ are able to learn easily how they can understand each other better and esteem each other more, and how the road to the unity of Christian may be made smooth".¹⁷

2. Befriending the Other Religions

2.1 For centuries most Christians believed that Christianity was the only true religion since it alone was divinely instituted. Perhaps the best known exponent of this view was Dr. Henrik Kraemer of Netherlands, who, in 1938, published a book titled: *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*.¹⁸ "The main thesis of my book", he wrote in the Foreword, "is that the Christian Revelation is ... absolutely *sui generis*."¹⁹ Following Barth and Kierkegaard, Kraemer maintained that there is an 'absolute qualitative difference' between the Gospel of Christ and all other religions. "When Christianity as a total religious system approaches the non-Christian religions as total religious systems, there is only difference and antithesis".²⁰ Hence it is not possible to compare Christianity with any other religion. "There is no point of contact: ... there are no bridges from human religious consciousness to Christ."²¹ Moreover non-Christian religions are, according to this view, quite incapable of leading human beings to a true knowledge of God or of salvation.

And among Catholics a Church-centred ecclesiology held sway for a long period of time. According to this theology the Church was the only

¹⁶ Decree on Ecumenism, n. 12.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ H. Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, London: 1938.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. IX.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 130, 300; see also pp. 115-120.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 131-132.

God-appointed means of salvation. There was no salvation outside the Church.²² The Church possessed the fullness of truth and can teach it infallibly. She was the only authoritative interpreter of the natural Law. By and large the Church's attitude to the other religions was quite negative. It was unthinkable that these religions might be ways of salvation for their followers. In 1867 Pius IX rejected as errors the following:

Everyone is free to embrace and profess the religion which by the light of reason he judges to be true. Men can find the way to eternal salvation and attain eternal salvation by the practice of any religion whatever.²³

No wonder, then, that Catholic missionaries were not interested in dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions. Speaking of them E. C. Dewick has remarked:

They went out with love for non-Christians in their hearts, but not with any thought of appreciating the non-Christian religions. Their purpose was simply to rescue souls from the clutches of heathenism in this world and from the fires of hell in the next. They went to give, and not to receive; to save, not to cooperate.²⁴

In all fairness it must be admitted that there were some Catholic thinkers like Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa who adopted a positive approach to the non-Christian religions. But they were not representative of the position generally held by Catholics.

2.2 It is in Vatican II that an Ecumenical Council for the first time dealt with the non-Christian religions. While discussing the schema on the Church the Council Fathers requested that non-Christians be treated not globally but according to the religious groups to which they belonged. Hence *Lumen Gentium* deals with the Jews, the Muslims, those who believe in God and then the non-believers.²⁵ *Nostra Aetate* speaks of

²² See Neuner-Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, n. 810.

²³ *Ibid.*, n.810.

²⁴ E. C. Dewick, *The Christian Attitude to Other Religions*, London: Cambridge, 1953, p. 116.

²⁵ See Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, n. 16.

Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Judaism.²⁶ And Vatican II vindicates religious freedom not only for Christians but also for the followers of other religions.²⁷ Thus recognition is accorded to the world religions.

This is the first step in the Council's effort to befriend the other religions.

The second step is the expression of genuine appreciation of the positive values to be found in these religions – truth and goodness, grace and holiness.²⁸ Vatican II believes that God is the source of these values. According to the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, “whatever goodness or truth is found among them is looked upon by the Church ... as given by Him who enlightens all men and women that they may finally have life.”²⁹ Here the text refers to John 1:9 which says that the Word was the true light which enlightens everyone. John is here speaking of the eternal Word and not the incarnate Word. The Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church regards whatever truth and grace are to be found among the nations “as a secret presence of God.”³⁰

Hence for the Council these religions are not pure human creations. God is at work in their origin and growth.

This leads to the third step. Vatican II exhorts the children of the Church:

Prudently and lovingly, through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, and in witness of Christian faith and life, acknowledge, preserve, and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among these men, as well as the values in their society and culture.³¹

²⁶ See Vatican II, Declaration on the Church's Relationship to Non-Christian Religions.

²⁷ Vatican II, Declaration on Religious Freedom, n. 4.²⁸ See Dogmatic Constitution, n.16; Decree on Priestly Formation, n. 16; Declaration on the Church's Relationship to Non-Christian Religions, n. 2.

²⁹ Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, n.16.

³⁰ Decree on the Missionary Activity, n. 9.

³¹ Declaration on the Church's Relationship to Non-Christian Religions, n 2.

The Council looks upon dialogue as a means to arrive at truth through love and as a spiritual pursuit:

We also turn our thoughts to all who acknowledge God and who preserve in their traditions precious elements of religion and humanity. We want frank conversation to compel us all to receive the inspirations of the Spirit faithfully and to measure up to them energetically.

For our part, the desire for such dialogue which can lead to truth through love alone, excludes no one, though an appropriate measure of prudence must undoubtedly be exercised.³²

The Council also encourages collaboration among the followers of different religions:

Since God the Father is the origin and purpose of all men and women, we are all called to be brothers and sisters. Therefore, if we have been summoned to the same destiny, which is both human and divine, we can and we should work together without violence and deceit in order to build up the world in genuine peace.³³

Thus Vatican II looks upon the followers of other religions as partners in our common quest for justice and peace in the world.

3. Befriending the Modern World

3.1 Right from the beginning the Church's attitude to the world was ambiguous.³⁴ On the one hand it looked upon the world as an object of God's love, since God created it and continued to care for it. On the other hand it regarded the world as hostile to God, since it had closed itself against God in its sinful self-sufficiency. Both John and Paul, among the New Testament writers, gave expression to this ambiguity.³⁵

³² Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, n. 92.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ See J. Neuner, "The Role and Responsibility of the Laity in the struggle for a New Society" in D. S. Amalorpavadass, (ed.), *The Indian Church in the Struggle for a New Society*, Bangalore: NBCSLC, 1981, pp. 44-449.

³⁵ See J. L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible*, pp. 942-944.

During the centuries of Roman persecution the Church adopted a very negative attitude to the world. It thought of itself as a community of believers surrounded by a wicked world.³⁶ Baptism was the moment of decision when a person renounced the spirit of the world and embraced the spirit of Christ.³⁷ The *Didache* has preserved a text which shows that the Eucharistic celebration concluded with the words: "Let grace come, let this world pass away."³⁸

The Church of the Middle ages was somewhat ambivalent in its approach to the world. It fostered a spirituality based on a contempt of the world. As Alfons Auer had pointed out:

The basic attitude of the Middle Ages was one-sidedly that of flight from the world. The monastic ascetical ideal prevailed also in the world; medieval Christianity was predominantly shaped by monks. Its ideal of life had a fascinating effect also upon laymen; one thought he could serve God best and most uncompromisingly when he bade farewell to the world.³⁹

There was on the other hand an effort made to subjugate the world to the Church or even to absorb it. To quote Auer once again,

In the greatness of the Middle Ages its very limitations become all the more apparent. No other age was able to achieve to the same degree a blending of the terrestrial and heavenly kingdom into a single universal order in which the temporal realms were directly ordered to the spiritual reality of the Church, and even – in order to maintain this order – directly or at least indirectly subjugated to ecclesiastical regulation. This unitary order necessarily resulted in a situation in which temporal matters were not adequately considered with respect to their inherent value nor sufficiently

³⁶ See J. Neuner, "The Role and Responsibility of the Laity", p. 448.

³⁷ See E. Schillebeeckx, *Ministry: A Case for Change*, London: SCM Press, 1981, p. 56.³⁸ *Didache*, 10, 6.

³⁹ A. Auer, "The Changing Character of the Christian Understanding of the World", in *The Christian and the World: Readings in Theology*, compiled by Canisianum, Innsbruck, 1965, p. 6.

seen as fashioned according to their own laws. In the long run, the sacred order of the Middle Ages amounted to the same thing as Monophysitism.⁴⁰

In a way the modern phenomenon of secularization is a reaction to this tendency on the part of the Church to absorb the world and not to respect it in its otherness. Gradually human beings, human society and its institutions, the arts and the sciences, work and professions began to assert their autonomy with respect to the Church and to affirm their intrinsic value. However, the Church reacted to this process quite negatively. As Avery Dulles observes,

The papal encyclicals from Gregory XVI (1831-46) to Pius XII (1939-59) continually deplore modern errors. *The Syllabus of Errors*, published by Pius IX in 1864, comes to a climax with Error No. 80: "The Roman pontiff can and should reconcile himself with, and adjust to progress, liberalism, and recent civilization." In 1907 the Church condemned Modernism, a movement that had begun as an effort by Catholics to bring the Church abreast of the times. Much later, just as World War II was breaking out, Pius XII issued his first encyclical, *Darkness over the Earth* (*Summi Pontificatus*, Oct. 20, 19039), reflecting remnants of this antimodernist mentality.⁴¹

3.2 Pope John XXIII had quite a different attitude. In his Apostolic Constitution convoking Vatican II he emphatically declared: "Distrustful souls see only darkness burdening the face of the earth. We, instead, like to reaffirm all our confidence in our Saviour, who has not left the world he redeemed."⁴² And in his opening address to the first session he made it clear that he was not one of those who "in these modern times... can see nothing but prevarication and ruin".⁴³ Pope John's

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

⁴¹ A. Dulles, *Models of the Church*, Garden City: 1974, p. 31.

⁴² Pope John XXIII, Apostolic Constitution "*Humanae Solutis*" dated December 25, 1961, convoking the Council. See W. R. Abbot, *Documents of Vatican II*, New York: America Press, 1966, p. 704.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 712.

positive attitude to the modern world has had a great impact on *Gaudium et Spes*. That is probably why it has turned out to be one of the most inspiring documents of the Council.

Right at the beginning the Pastoral Constitution explains how it understands the modern world:

Therefore, the Council focuses its attention on the world of men, the whole human family along with the sum of those realities in the midst of which that family lives. It gazes upon that world which is the theatre of man's history, and carries the marks of his energies, his tragedies, and his triumphs; that world which the Christian sees as created and sustained by its Maker's love, fallen indeed into the bondage of sin, yet emancipated now by Christ.⁴⁴

There are three important elements in the Council's understanding of the modern world. This world is a world of human beings together with the subhuman creation in the midst of which they live. It is the scene of their history and bears the mark of their labour and their struggle, their successes and their failures. Though this world fell into sin it has been liberated by Christ. This is a very positive way of looking at the world. It is interesting to note that Vatican II regards the difficulties brought about by the rapid changes taking place in the world as a 'crisis of growth'.⁴⁵

All this constitutes the first step in the Council's befriending of the modern world.

The second step is that Vatican II has adopted a positive attitude to the process of secularization. In unmistakable terms it declares:

If by the autonomy of earthly affairs we mean that created things and societies themselves enjoy their own laws and values which must be gradually deciphered, put to use, and regulated by men, then it is entirely right to demand that autonomy. Such is not merely

⁴⁴ Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, n. 2. **Please note:** The English translation of the documents of Vatican II is not gender-sensitive.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, n. 4.

required by modern man, but harmonizes also with the will of the Creator. For by the very circumstance of their having been created, all things are endowed with their own stability, truth, goodness, proper laws, and order. Man must respect these as he isolates them by the appropriate methods of the individual sciences or arts.⁴⁶

Such a view leads to the recognition of the freedom and legitimacy of the arts and the sciences. As *Gaudium et Spes* puts it,

The Church is not against the use by human arts and sciences of their own principles and methods in their respective fields; therefore it acknowledges this lawful freedom and affirms the legitimate autonomy of culture and especially of the sciences.⁴⁷

The third step that the Council has taken in befriending the modern world is this: It expresses its appreciation of the developments in the world:

The Council, therefore, looks with great respect upon all the true, good, and just elements found in the very wide variety of institutions which the human race has established for itself and constantly continues to establish.⁴⁸

Vatican II goes on to add:

The Church further recognizes that worthy elements are found in today's social movements, especially an evolution toward unity, a process of wholesome socialization and of association in civic and economic realms. For the promotion of unity belongs to the innermost nature of the Church, since she is, "by her relationship with Christ, both a sacramental sign and an instrument of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all humankind."⁴⁹

A fourth step is the manifestation of the Council's eagerness to dialogue with the modern world. It believes that "this Council can provide

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, n. 36.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, n. 59.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, n. 42.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

no more eloquent proof of its solidarity with the entire human family with which it is bound up, as well as its respect and love for that family, than by engaging with it in conversation about these various problems".⁵⁰

In this context I would like to quote a pertinent observation made by Avery Dulles:

The Pastoral Constitution, in particular, sought to bring the Church into dialogue with the world on a basis of mutual respect and reciprocal give-and-take... The Council sees the Church as involved with the world in the tremendous social and cultural transformations of our times, and affirms the Church's solidarity with 'the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men and women of this age'. Renouncing any attitude of haughty superiority, the Council expresses 'great respect' for "all the true, good and just elements found in the very wide variety of institutions which the human race has established for itself and constantly continues to establish". The Church here professes its readiness to put its talents and resources to work in order to contribute to secular goals such as peace, freedom, justice and human dignity.⁵¹

What is perhaps most significant in the Pastoral Constitution is that it conceives the role of the Church in the modern world as that of a servant. Inspired by no earthly ambition, the Church wishes only to carry forward the work of Christ who came not to be served but to serve.⁵² Hence "Christians cannot yearn for anything more ardently than to serve the men and women of the modern world ever more generously and effectively".⁵³ The document spells out concretely the kind of service that the Church can render to human persons, human communities and human activity in the world.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, n. 3.

⁵¹ A Dulles, "The Church in Communication" in *Catholic Mind*, 69 (1971), p. 11.

⁵² Pastoral Constitution, n. 3.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, n. 93.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, nos. 40-43.

Yet another step in the Council's befriending of the modern world is this: It gratefully acknowledges the benefits the Church has received from the world. Vatican II has stated:

Thanks to the experience of past ages, the progress of the sciences, and the treasures hidden in the various forms of human culture, the nature of man himself is more clearly revealed and new roads to truth are opened. These benefits profit the Church, too.⁵⁵

The Council goes on to add:

Since the Church has a visible and social structure as a sign of her unity in Christ, she can and ought to be enriched by the development of human social life. The reason is not that the constitution given her by Christ is defective, but so that she may understand it more penetratingly, express it better, and adjust it more successfully to our times.⁵⁶

Conclusion

The Second Vatican Council has taken several steps to befriend the non-Catholic Christians and their Churches, the non-Christians and their religions and the modern world. It is upto the Catholic faithful now to imbibe the spirit of this great Council and establish cordial relations with non-Catholic Christians, the followers of other faiths and the modern world.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, n. 44.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*